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Contact: Roger Cunningham, jeff@access.net, 212-594-7501

Encompass New Opera Theatre

presents the World Premiere of

Angel of the Amazon

May 6 – 22, 2011

At Baryshnikov Arts Center

Encompass New Opera Theatre (Nancy Rhodes, Artistic Director and Mara Waldman, Music Director) presents the World Premiere of *Angel of the Amazon*, a new music drama with libretto and music by Evan Mack at The Jerome Robbins Theater at Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 West 37th Street, NYC. Performances begin May 6 and run through May 22.

This compelling new work is based on the true story of Sister Dorothy Stang (1931-2005), an American born member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur order. In 2005, at the age of 73, she was brutally murdered by assassins hired by the owner of a logging company, who felt her passion for the Earth and all of its gifts to be a threat. *Angel of the Amazon* depicts her life's work and the events that set her on a path to martyrdom.

Sister Dorothy began her mission in the Brazilian rainforest in the early 1970s, eventually becoming a Brazilian citizen. Her life's work was helping the indigenous farmers make a living by cultivating their land and extracting forest products with minimum impact on the ecosystem. Dot, as she was called by her family, friends, and most locals in Brazil, was extremely outspoken in her efforts on behalf of the poor and the environment. She is often pictured wearing a t-shirt with the slogan *A Morte da floresta é o fim da nossa vida*, which is Portuguese for "The death of the forest is the end of our life." It was this outspokenness that brought her into conflict with local landowners and businessmen and eventually resulted in her assassination.

Mack was inspired to write the opera, his first, after attending a lecture about Sister Dorothy at St. Anthony Church in Madisonville, OH. "What struck me," explained Mack, "was that Sister Dorothy met her gunmen the day before, fed them, prayed with them, and showed them her work with the peasant farmers of the area. When the gunmen showed up the next day, Sr. Dorothy opened her bible, saying 'This is my only weapon,' and started reading the Beatitudes. 'Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the Kingdom, Blessed are the...' and she was shot six times. As soon as I heard that story, I thought 'this *needs* to be an opera.'" Mack presented *Angel of the Amazon* to Encompass New Opera Theatre, where it has been developed over the past year.

Sister Dorothy's story has been chronicled in several written biographies as well as in Daniel Junge's documentary film "They Killed Sister Dorothy."

The cast includes 2011 Lotte Lenya Competition winner Caitlin Mathes as Sister Dorothy, José Rubio as Luiz, and Michael Armstrong Barr, Jose Candelaria, Jennifer Caruana, Amanda-Camille Isaac, Douglas Jabara, Amanda Lee, Matthew Morris, Brittany Palmer, Adam Russell, Justin Ryan, Lara Stevens and Elex Lee Vann. Sets, lighting and projections are designed by J. Michael Deegan. Costume design is by Angela Huff. The production stage manager is Cassandra Powell.

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About Evan Mack (composer/librettist)

Evan Mack received his DMA from the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music. A champion of American piano music, he was recently featured on Chicago Public Radio for the Dame Myra Hess Concert Series. Earlier in 2011, Mack's *Three Reflections of Sister Dorothy, for Mezzo and Orchestra* was performed by the Blue Ash/Montgomery Symphony. Later this year, his ballet *Pinocchio* will be premiered with the Charleston Ballet and his work for two pianos, *American Groove*, will be performed by the Westhuizen Duo all across the United States and South Africa. Dr. Mack is a two time Selection Winner of the National Association of Composers and a Selection Winner of the 2010 SCI Region IV Conference. He is currently on the faculty of Skidmore College.

About Encompass New Opera Theatre

Encompass New Opera (Nancy Rhodes, Founding Artistic Director) is one of the nation's leading companies championing American opera and new music theatre for more than 30 years. Dedicated to creating, developing and producing adventurous productions of new opera, the company strives to discover and nurture new composers, librettists, singers and musicians, premiere groundbreaking new productions, and revive important 20th century musical works by outstanding American and international composers. Encompass has produced over 55 fully-mounted operas with orchestra and staged readings of more than 155 new works.

The many innovative new works staged by Ms. Rhodes include the World Premiere of *Only Heaven* by Ricky Ian Gordon, based on poetry by Langston Hughes, and the New York premieres of *Shaw Sings*, composed by Phil Hagemann from George Bernard Shaw's short stories, and Russian composer Grigori Frid's *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Ms. Rhodes also staged the Virgil Thomson/Gertrude Stein opera *Four Saints in Three Acts* for the 75th Anniversary of its premiere on Broadway.

Notable productions include the comic operas *Frustration* by Sheldon Harnick, and *Satisfaction* by Charles Strouse; *Postcard from Morocco* and *Miss Havisham's Wedding Night* by Dominick Argento; *Regina* by Marc Blitzstein; *The Tender Land* by Aaron Copland; and Encompass' award-winning production of *The Mother of Us All* by Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein

Next season, Encompass will produce the world premiere of *The Theory of Everything* (John David Earnest/Nancy Rhodes). *Theory* was commissioned by Encompass and has been in development for the past three years. www.encompassopera.org.

Angel of the Amazon

The Jerome Robbins Theater at Baryshnikov Arts Center
450 West 37th Street (between 9th & 10th Avenues)
May 6 – 22, 2011 (Wed – Sat at 8pm & Sun at 3pm)
Running time: 90 minutes with one intermission
Tickets: \$55 orchestra / \$45 balcony / \$30 students and seniors
20% discount for groups of 15 or more
Box Office: 212-868-4444 or www.SmartTix.com

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