



## PRESS RELEASE

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### OPERA STUDIO TO PRODUCE FAMILY-FRIENDLY HOLIDAY CLASSIC

FORT WORTH – Fort Worth Opera Studio, a training program for upcoming artists, will produce *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, this holiday season with four performances in Fort Worth and one in Longview, Texas as part of Opera East Texas' 2007 Season. Fort Worth Opera Studio produced *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in 2002 with a young woman in the lead. This time, the role of Amahl will be performed by 11-year-old Eric Illick; his father, Joseph Illick, will conduct the show. Fort Worth Opera will host a complimentary "meet the cast" reception after each Fort Worth performance open to children and adults.

Fort Worth Opera Studio was established in 2002 as a training program for operatic artists beginning their professional careers. Four singers and one pianist are selected through national auditions to be in residence with Fort Worth Opera from mid-September through mid-May. The group tours Texas as part of the Children's Opera Theatre and are traditionally given smaller roles in Fort Worth Opera's main-stage productions. The company is hoping to add annual production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* to the Studio program.

"*Amahl* will allow us to provide high quality, family friendly entertainment during the holidays while giving our young artists valuable experience and training at the same time," says Darren K. Woods, Fort Worth Opera's General Director. "Our collaboration with Opera East Texas makes this year even more special."

**BACKGROUND:** *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is a Christmas story that marks two historical firsts: it was the first opera to be written for television and it was featured as the first *Hallmark Hall of Fame* special. It premiered December 24, 1951 on NBC. The composer and librettist, Gian Carlo Menotti, passed away on February 1, 2007. He reigned as one of America's most prolific operatic composers for nearly four decades; his honors include a Pulitzer Prize and a Kennedy Center Honor for lifetime achievement in the arts. Similar to the character Amahl, as a child Menotti was thought to be cured of a crippled leg after his nurse took him to a shrine.

**STORY:** *Amahl* tells the story of a crippled boy who by chance crosses paths with the three Wise Men on their way to visit the infant Jesus. The three men and their page need a place to stay for the night and, in spite of her poverty, Amahl's mother generously offers her hospitality to the splendid visitors. The Kings take a liking to the energetic boy and feel pity for his mother, eventually giving her the gold originally intended for the baby Jesus, saying that the Child they seek has no need of it. Amahl and his mother are enthralled by the idea of the Child; she begs the men to take back the gold and Amahl wants to send the Child his crutch. As he lifts his crutch to hand it over, he amazingly takes a step without it. The Kings give thanks to God as Amahl dances around. Still intent on giving his crutch to the Child, Amahl joins the men on their way to meet the Child.

**PRODUCTION:** One act, performed in English. Approximately 45 minutes in length.

**DATES/TIMES/LOCATIONS:**

**Longview:** December 1, 2007 at 8:00 pm at the LeTourneau University Campus, Longview, Texas

**Fort Worth:** All 2007 Fort Worth performances will be held at the Rose Marine Theater at 1440 North Main Street

- December 14 at 7:30 pm
- December 15 at 3:00 pm
- December 15 at 7:30 pm
- December 16 at 3:00 pm

**PRIMARY CAST:**

Amahl	Eric Illick
Mother	Alissa Anderson (Evening performances, including Longview) Brandi Icard (Matinee performances)
King Kaspar	Jamin Flabiano
King Melchior	Larry Harris (Longview) Stephen Mumbert (Fort Worth)
King Balthazar	Donald Jones
Page/Slave	Nathan DePointe
Director & Scenic Designer	Richard Kagey
Conductor	Joseph Illick

**TICKETS:**

**Longview:** \$10-20 each. Available online at [www.operact.com](http://www.operact.com) or by phone at 903.234.1300

**Fort Worth:** Adult \$18, Children under 12 \$5. Available online at [www.fwopera.org](http://www.fwopera.org) or by phone at 817.731.0726

**ABOUT FWOPERA:** Fort Worth Opera was founded in 1946 and is the oldest, continually performing opera company in Texas and one of the 14 oldest opera companies in the United States. In recent years, under the leadership of Darren Keith Woods, the company has gained national attention from critics and audiences alike for its artistic quality and willingness to take risks. The 2007 season marked the company's first season to be performed in a one-month festival format and featured the company's first major world premiere, *Frau Margot* by composer Thomas Pasatieri. Darren Keith Woods, who began his operatic career in 1982 as a character tenor, joined Fort Worth Opera as General Director in 2001. More information about the Festival and company can be found on the website: [www.fwopera.org](http://www.fwopera.org).

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