



PRESS RELEASE

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FORT WORTH OPERA TO PRODUCE WORLD PREMIERE – *Before Night Falls* to become an opera

FORT WORTH – **Fort Worth Opera announces** that it will produce a world premiere opera as part of its 2010 Festival. The opera, *Before Night Falls*, is by **Jorge Martín**, a **Cuban-American composer** relatively new to the operatic stage; *Before Night Falls* will be his first major world premiere. The opera is based on the **autobiography of the same title by Reinaldo Arenas**, a Cuban poet, novelist and playwright who was an outspoken critic of Fidel Castro's regime. In addition to composing the music, Martín also wrote the libretto with the help of Dolores M. Koch, a personal friend of Arenas and the Spanish-to-English translator for several of his books, including *Before Night Falls*.

Darren K. Woods, general director of Fort Worth Opera, first learned of *Before Night Falls* in 2005 after American Opera Projects in New York presented piano readings from the then unfinished opera as part of the Cuban Arts Festival. At Woods' request, the completed opera was produced with piano and student artists at a workshop at the Seagle Music Colony in Schroon Lake, New York in August 2008. "As soon as we saw *Before Night Falls* at the workshop, my team and I knew this was an opportunity we didn't want to pass up," said Woods. "I told Jorge [Martín] that night that we wanted to do the world premiere in Fort Worth."

Before Night Falls will premiere in Fort Worth, Texas at **Bass Performance Hall**, considered to be one of the top opera houses in the world, in the **spring of 2010**. **Exact performance dates and ticket information, including prices, have not yet been announced.**

For Photos:

Photos of Jorge Martín, Bass Performance Hall and Darren K. Woods are currently posted online at www.fwopera.org, under "Press." Call Diane Rhodes Bergman at 817.269.9795 for the password.

About the composer/librettist, Jorge Martín (1959-)

Jorge Martín was born in Santiago de Cuba in 1959, the year Fidel Castro became leader of Cuba. Martín's family fled Cuba and eventually settled in the U.S. in 1965. At age four, he began piano lessons; he attended Yale College and earned master's and doctoral degrees in music composition from Columbia University. He writes in all major genres: orchestral, opera, chamber, choral, vocal, and solo works. His has had works commissioned by the Concert Artists Guild, Close Encounters with Music and the Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble. He won the 2003 Vermont Music Teachers commission award; in 2001 he was one of the featured composers in New York City Opera's "Vox: Showcasing American Composers." In 1999 he received a generous Cintas Fellowship for creative artists of Cuban descent, and also the American Academy of Arts and Letters' prestigious Academy Award in Music in 1998. In 2005 Martín was awarded a fellowship by the Bogliasco Foundation in Genoa and artist's residencies at Yaddo in Saratoga Springs in 1993 and again in 2003. More information about Jorge Martín can be found on his website: www.jorgemartin.com.

About *Before Night Falls*

The opera *Before Night Falls* is based on the real life story of Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas, beginning with his teen-aged decision to leave his impoverished family in rural Cuba and join Fidel Castro's revolution. After Castro comes into power and begins oppressing the people he promised to free, Reinaldo begins a quiet rebellion of his own through his writings and associations. A manuscript of Reinaldo's is smuggled out of the country and published in France. Suddenly he is known around the world and a target for Castro's persecution. Castro's regime wants to avoid the negative attention of imprisoning Reinaldo for exercising free speech, so instead, he is imprisoned for being gay. He suffers greatly and comes close to giving up, but his love for his country and his art keep him going. He finally

manages to escape to the United States, where he continues his efforts to fight for a free Cuba. He finds out he has AIDS, but wants to complete his memoir before he dies of the disease. Having completed the book and tired of the physical and emotional toll of AIDS, Reinaldo commits suicide.

About Darren Keith Woods and Fort Worth Opera

Fort Worth Opera was founded in 1946 by three women, Eloise Snyder, Betty Spain, and Jeanne Axtell Walker. It is the oldest, continually performing opera company in Texas and one of the 14 oldest opera companies in the United States. The company produces between three and four operas per season. The company revamped its mission and image in early 2003, which included stronger support for newer operatic works and eventually led to the company's conversion to a festival format. The company produced its first mainstage world premiere, *Frau Margot* by Thomas Pasatieri, during the inaugural festival season in 2007.

Darren Keith Woods joined Fort Worth Opera as General Director in 2001. He began his operatic career in 1982 as a character tenor.

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