

# Korczak's Orphans

## *an opera in three acts*

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*New York City Opera presents a preview of the new opera "Korczak's Orphans" at Symphony Space*

On Wednesday, May 26, 2004 at 2:00 PM at the Peter Jay Sharp Theater in Symphony Space, **New York City Opera's VOX 2004** showcase will feature a work-in-progress concert performance of Act II from *Korczak's Orphans*, a new opera based on the life of Janusz Korczak (1878-1942). Korczak, a Polish Jew, was a medical doctor, Army officer, educator, radio personality, and author who protected 200 Jewish children in his orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II, and died with them at the concentration camp at Treblinka. Symphony Space is at 2537 Broadway at 95<sup>th</sup> Street, new York, NY. Admission to the performance is free.

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NEW YORK, NY: On Wednesday, May 26, 2004 at 2:00 PM at the Peter Jay Sharp Theater in Symphony Space, **New York City Opera's VOX 2004** showcase will feature a work-in-progress concert performance of Act II from *Korczak's Orphans*, a new opera based on the life of Janusz Korczak (1878-1942). Korczak, a Polish Jew, was a medical doctor, Army officer, educator, radio personality, and author who protected 200 Jewish children in his orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II, and died with them at the concentration camp at Treblinka.

By composer **Adam Silverman** and poet **Susan Gubernat**, *Korczak's Orphans* is based on the life of a visionary individual who not only endured the horrors of life in Nazi-occupied Poland, but emerged as a prescient figure in child-psychology while struggling to protect the orphans under his care from Hitler's Gestapo. Korczak visualized orphanages as communities, and established such novel practices as a children's court and newspaper that taught children responsibility, compassion, and fairness. In the orphanage that he built to shelter children left homeless in the Jewish Warsaw Ghetto, he created a "Children's Republic," complete with flag. When the Nazis finally came for him, he led the children in a "dignified processional out of the gates of the orphanage, past a stunned citizenry and muted cadre of SS officers," Gubernat says, the children carrying "the flag of their 'Children's Republic' into the waiting cattle cars," which then transported all of them to certain death at Treblinka.

Conducted by NYCO's music director George Manahan, the opera features Janusz Korczak as its central character, which will be sung by tenor Paul Mow, who starred in New York City Opera's production of *Of Mice and Men* as Lennie Small. Also featured on the concert are works by Richard Danielpour (to an original libretto by Nobel laureate Toni Morrison), Tom Cipullo, and Daniel Felsenfeld. Admission is free, no tickets are required.

### COMPOSER AND LIBRETTIST BIOS:

**Composer ADAM B. SILVERMAN** is a New York City – based composer whose works have been commissioned and performed internationally by Eighth Blackbird, The Tanglewood Festival Orchestra, The Brooklyn Symphony, The Albany Symphony Chamber Orchestra, The Amelia Piano Trio, The Flux Quartet, Antares, Real Time Opera, The Yale Philharmonic, The University of Miami Symphony, and The Denver Young Artists Orchestra. His works have been performed at venues including Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, The Library of Congress, The Metropolitan Museum, La Jolla

Chamber Music Society, and the Spoleto Festival. Silverman's works range from opera (*Korczak's Orphans*) to classical concert music (the piano trio *Sturm* and *String Quartet No. 2*), rock-based music for live performers and electronics (*Strawberry Fields Continued* for percussion, cellos, and recording), conceptual music-theater (*Telemusic* for phones and percussion and *The Mostly True Story of Professor Leon and Me*) and educational music. Of *Sturm*, The San Diego Reader wrote, "The music's stylistic ancestors seemed to include Fauré and Chausson (for the textures, the harmonies, and the superbly idiomatic instrumental writing), and John Adams (for the relentless drive and dynamic repetitiveness)." The New York Times said, "The most surprising work was Adam Silverman's *In Another Man's Skin*, gurgling washes of sweet tonality, slightly out of kilter, slightly tongue-in-cheek." Since 1998, he has directed the Minimum Security Composers Collective, a group of which he is co-founder. He received a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in composition at Yale in 2003, and also studied music at the Vienna Musikhochschule and the University of Miami.

**Poet/librettist Susan Gubernat** was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey. Her first book of poems, *Flesh* (Helicon Nine Editions: 1999), won the Marianne Moore Prize, having been characterized as a "stunning debut" (Robert Phillips) and a "refreshing new voice in American poetry" (Carolyn Kizer). She has been awarded a New York State Arts Council poetry fellowship, as well as residencies at Yaddo, MacDowell, and the Millay Colony. Among her other grants and awards is the Rossley New Voice Award 2000, the Washington Prize (WordWorks), and a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship in Women's Studies. Gubernat earned her MFA in poetry from the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa in 1992. She has been a member of the English Department of Nassau Community College (SUNY) and is currently an assistant professor in the Creative Writing Program of the English Department at California State University, Hayward.