

August 30, 2006

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Portland Center for the Performing Arts

Presents

The premiere of *Too Much Coffee Man Opera*

*Too Much Coffee Man jumps from the page to the stage in
the world's first opera based on a contemporary comic book series
Premieres September 22, 2006 at 8:00 pm at Brunish Hall*



In what is believed to be the first opera inspired by a comic book, the *Too Much Coffee Man Opera*—presented by the Portland Center for the Performing Arts—jumps to the stage September 22-30, 2006 at Brunish Hall in Portland. The contemporary opera—based on *Too Much Coffee Man*, a syndicated comic strip featured in books and alternative weeklies nationwide—blends post-modern caffeine humor and traditional opera.

Created by Shannon Wheeler and co-written with Damian Willcox, the one-act opera details the tragedy of Too Much Coffee Man, a caffeine-addled everyman in love with his Barista. Trouble brews when Espresso Guy, a cynical opportunist, also makes a play for the ambitious, but frustrated, young Barista. But, the Barista has other plans that have nothing to do with either of them. The characters must resolve the age-old dilemma: Can coffee and relationships co-exist?

The *Too Much Coffee Man* cast features artists gaining prominence in the Pacific Northwest for their operatic performance. Singing the title role of Too Much Coffee Man is baritone Stacey Murdock, who recently made a debut with Portland Opera in the role of Junius in *The Rape of Lucretia*. Tenor Matt Dolphin performs the role of Espresso Guy. Dolphin was recognized with the Bishop Luers award for best male vocalist and has performed solos with the Oregon Lyric Opera, Chehalem Symphony and Portland Symphonic Choir. Mezzo-soprano Jasmine Presson performs the role of Barista. Presson's work follows recent accomplishments as an apprentice artist with Astoria Music Festival where she performed in Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame* and the American premiere of Mozart's *Der Stein der Weisen*.

The opera is directed by Devon Allen in association with Our Shoes Are Red/The Performance Lab, which works internationally on new work, interpreting the classics, and producing great writers rarely seen. The musical score, written by Emmy award winning composer Daniel Steven Crafts, features

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accompaniment with piano, bass and clarinet.. The music director is Joseph Prather, known for his collaborations and performances with Portland Opera, Portland State University and Central City Opera in Colorado. The opera is produced by Randy Rollison with Ajax Arts in association with the Portland Center for the Performing Arts.

Other artists include Carolyn Holzman, choreographer; Clair Callaway, stage manager; Sandra Zodnik, costumer; Paul McCullough, lighting designer; Bethany Foran, set designer (with Wheeler); and Sarah Christensen, assistant to the director.

The Too Much Coffee Man Opera is sponsored by Stumptown Coffee, Dark Horse Comics and Missing Link Toys.

CAST

Stacey Murdock	Too Much Coffee Man
Matt Dolphin	Espresso Guy
Jasmine Presson	Barista
Devon Allen	Stage Director
Joseph Prather	Music Director

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN OPERA

Music by:	Daniel Steven Crafts
Libretto:	Shannon Wheeler and Damian Willcox
Lyrics:	English
World Premiere:	September 22, 2006 at Brunish Hall, Portland, Oregon.
Performances:	September 22, 23, 29 and 30 at 8:00 pm

All performances held at Brunish Hall at the New Theatre Building, 1111 SW Broadway, Portland

Ticket Information

Single tickets, from \$24.50 to \$30.25, can be purchased at:

By Phone: Ticketmaster 503.790.ARTS (503.790.2787)

Online: www.ticketmaster.com

In-Person: Portland Center for the Performing Arts Box Office
1111 SW Broadway, Portland
Mon-Sat. 10am to 5pm

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Biographies



Stacey Murdock has been a steady fixture in the Portland music scene and has performed throughout Oregon and the Northwest. He recently made his debut with Portland Opera in the role of Junius in *The Rape of Lucretia*, and was a member of the Portland Opera Works outreach program for the past three seasons. Stacey was a featured artist in Martina Arroyo's Prelude to Performance program in the summer of 2005 where he performed the role of the Count in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and the Sacristan in *Tosca* at the Da Capo Opera Theater in New York City. He has also been a frequent performer in the Astoria Music Festival and Portland Summerfest. Murdock resides in Beaverton, Oregon with his wife and three children.



Matt Dolphin is a singer, musician and co-founder of the Oregon Music Academy where he teaches guitar, piano, music theory and voice. Dolphin has garnered recognition and awards for his vocal work, including the Bishop Luers best male vocalist award and was nominated to the Showstoppers National soloist competition in Chicago. Dolphin has performed solos with the Oregon Lyric Opera, Chehalem Symphony, Portland Symphonic Choir, Lafayette Symphony, Redlands Symphony (CA), Indianapolis Arts Chorale, and has premiered new works by living composers.



Jasmine Presson is a singer, actress and director of off-off Broadway theatre. Presson recently performed as an apprentice artist with the Astoria Music Festival. Previous credits include performances of Rorem's one-act operas at Brooklyn College and the world premiere of *Rain*, by Korean composer Hae Kyoung Park, at the Kaye Playhouse. Before her artistic conversion to operatic performance, Jasmine spent half a decade acting and directing in New York City venues including WOW Café Theatre, Dixon Place and The Looking Glass Theatre. Presson holds a BA degree in Theatre Arts from Kalamazoo College.

Shannon Wheeler is the recipient of numerous national awards for his artwork including the Hatch Broadcasting Award and Eisner Award. He began drawing cartoons while studying architecture at UC Berkeley and has been chronicling the adventures of *Too Much Coffee Man* since 1993. *Too Much Coffee Man* appears in a dozen alternative newspapers and has been compiled in four graphic novels published by Dark Horse Comics. Wheeler resides in Portland, Oregon with his family.

Damian Willcox is an award-nominated independent comic creator, freelance illustrator, writer and poet and the creator of the popular *dorkboy* comic. His work with the *dorkboy* comic character garnered interest from publishers, animation studios and movie production companies and has been

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published in print, television and radio. Willcox has self-published more than 20 books and created hundreds of online comics. Willcox lives in Calgary, Alberta with his wife.

Daniel Steven Crafts has written seven operas and 13 large orchestral works, as well as a variety of shorter pieces. His piece *The Song and the Slogan*, written with opera star Jerry Hadley, won an Emmy for Best Music in 2003. Crafts has won awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and ASCAP, and his music has been praised for its strong melodies and sense of humor. Crafts lives in New Mexico.

Devon Allen is a professional actor and director. She is the artistic director of Our Shoes Are Red/The Performance Lab, which works internationally on new work, interpreting the classics, and producing great writers rarely seen. Currently head of acting at the Department of Theater Arts at Portland State University, she teaches acting, directing and creative process privately and at major universities in the United States. Ms. Allen holds a certificate from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and an MFA in Acting from the University of California at San Diego. She is a member of Actors' Equity and the Directors Lab at the Lincoln Center.

Randy Rollison is an artistic director, producer, presenter and manager of nonprofit arts organizations. During his two-decade career he has helped over 1,000 works of theatre and dance reach the stage. His work as a producer/director garnered OBIE Awards for excellence in performance, design and production. Rollison served as executive artistic director for the Cleveland Public Theatre, and he co-founded and served as producing artistic director of HOME for Contemporary Theatre and Art and the HERE Arts Center, both in New York City.

Joseph Prather is a music director and pianist. Prather has worked with Portland Opera, Portland State University, Mannes School of Music in New York, and Central City Opera in Colorado. Prather toured Spain and Brazil as pianist for the American Spiritual Ensemble, and was an assistant conductor at Studio Lirico in Cortona, Italy. Prather is owner and music director of Blue Scout Music, producing and licensing music for advertising, film, television and album projects. He holds a BA in Piano Performance from the University of Kentucky.

Carolyn Holzman is a choreographer and was a founding member and principal performer with Do Jump Movement Theater for over a decade. She has choreographed numerous productions at Portland State University where she teaches movement for actors. Holzman has written and directed several original shows through her company, Dreamsburg Productions. She is a member of Our Shoes Are Red/Performance Lab.