

For Immediate Release

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***Laitman and Prize Winner Mason Poised
to Collaborate on Second Opera***

Poet **David Mason** has been named the recipient of the **2009 Thatcher Hoffman Smith Creativity in Motion Prize**. The \$40,000 prize, awarded by the University of Oklahoma College of Arts and Sciences, will allow Mason to embark on his second collaboration with American composer **Lori Laitman**, as he prepares an opera libretto of his acclaimed verse novel, *Ludlow*. This will be Mason's second opera project with Laitman, who composed a brilliant score to his libretto of Nathaniel Hawthorne's literary masterpiece, *The Scarlet Letter*. The opera was commissioned by the University of Central Arkansas and opened to rave reviews in November 2008. The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette wrote, "*Composer Lori Laitman has written gorgeous music that works hand-in-glove with the words of librettist David Mason and underpins the very essence of this psychological-social drama...the few arias are at key moments and are stunningly effective.*"

Mason, a successful published poet and professor of English at Colorado College, has written and edited nine books to date. *Ludlow* is the epic and searing story of a handful of immigrants caught up in a labour struggle in Southern Colorado which culminated in the infamous Ludlow Massacre of 1914. Published in 2007, *the verse novel was voted the best poetry book by the Contemporary Poetry Review*. Mason was inspired to adapt the story to opera after his initial experience in collaborating with Laitman on their first opera, and his conviction that opera may be the perfect medium to express this tragic, larger-than-life historic event in a manner which transcends the poetic text.

Composer **Lori Laitman** is one of America's most prolific and widely performed composers of art song. In addition to her full-length opera, *The Scarlet Letter*, she has composed nearly 200 songs, setting the words of classical and contemporary poets. Since

launching her career in 1991, Laitman's music has been performed frequently in many prestigious venues by some of the world's leading vocalists. Her work has been recorded on several CDs to critical acclaim by The Journal of Singing, Gramophone Magazine, Opera News and other leading musical publications. Laitman is thrilled at the prospect of creating a second opera with David Mason. She is currently collaborating with the poet on a Holocaust oratorio commissioned by Music of Remembrance and scheduled to premiere in May of 2010.

The Thatcher Hoffman Smith Creativity in Motion Prize, established in 2002, honours and celebrates a visionary creative work in process, recognizing the power of original thought and expression to enrich, and inspire. The prize is supported generously by Jeanne Hoffman Smith, Oklahoma City resident and social worker, and is named after her parents. Smith is a great supporter of local film programs and serves the community in several ways, including as a member of the Inasmuch Foundation Advisory Committee, Oklahoma State Film and Music Commission (trustee), Oklahoma City Art Museum (trustee and founder), Oklahoma City University Center for Interpersonal Studies through Film and Literature (board member), Oklahoma Humanities Council and the Kirkpatrick Foundation (trustee).

For information about David Mason, visit http://www.unco.edu/colopoets/poets/mason_david/

For more information on David Mason's Thatcher Hoffman Smith Creativity in Motion Prize, visit <http://cim.ou.edu/pressreleases.html>

To learn more about composer Lori Laitman, visit www.artsongs.com.

Laitman is represented by Jona Rapoport Artist Management.

Source:

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