

BLAKE ZIDELL & ASSOCIATES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Apatosaurus, (Brontosaurus) by Charles R. Knight, 1898
American Museum of Natural History

**ON SITE OPERA TO PRESENT WORLD PREMIERE OF
RHODA AND THE FOSSIL HUNT
A SITE-SPECIFIC OPERA FOR FAMILIES
WITH MUSIC BY JOHN MUSTO & LIBRETTO BY ERIC EINHORN
CO-COMMISSIONED & CO-PRODUCED WITH LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO'S LYRIC
UNLIMITED & PITTSBURGH OPERA**

**Created in Partnership with the American Museum of Natural History
Premieres Fall 2017 in the Hall of Saurischian Dinosaurs**

New York, NY—Known for staging “the ultimate in intimate productions” (*The New York Times*), **On Site Opera (OSO)** announces the world premiere of *Rhoda and the Fossil Hunt*, a new site-specific opera for family audiences with music by **John Musto** and libretto by **Eric Einhorn**. Co-commissioned and co-produced with **Lyric Opera of Chicago's Lyric Unlimited** and **Pittsburgh Opera**, *Rhoda and the Fossil Hunt* is based on the real-life experiences of **Rhoda Knight Kalt** and her trips to the **American Museum of Natural History (AMNH)** with her grandfather **Charles R. Knight**, the famous naturalist artist who was commissioned to create paintings and sculptures of prehistoric creatures – many still on display at the AMNH today. The opera premieres in the AMNH's **Hall of Saurischian Dinosaurs** in the fall 2017 before traveling to Chicago (Lyric Unlimited) and Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh Opera).

In the early 20th century, **Dr. Henry Fairfield Osborn**, paleontologist and president of the AMNH, turned to painter Charles R. Knight to bring their fossil collection to life for museum visitors. Through his work, Knight took viewers millions of years back in time to view non-avian dinosaurs as active, fleshed out creatures. Every weekend, Knight's granddaughter Rhoda accompanied “Tippy” (as she called him) to the museum while he worked. As Knight painted, little Rhoda watched in awe as the massive fossils unpacked by the museum's paleontologists were transformed into living, breathing creatures on Tippy's canvases and sculptures.

Inspired by the stories of Rhoda and “Tippy,” OSO has commissioned American composer John Musto and Eric Einhorn, to bring *Rhoda's Fossil Hunt* to life. Audiences will join Rhoda as she goes on a hunt for missing fossils around the hall, while learning about the interconnectedness of creativity and science.

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Following the premiere performance in the fall of 2017, *Rhoda and the Fossil Hunt*, will be featured in a month-long performance residency at the AMNH. Prior to the premiere, two workshops (October 2016; March 2017) will be held to develop the piece at the AMNH.

About the Creators:

John Musto (Composer, *Rhoda and the Fossil Hunt*) is that all too rare exemplar, the classical composer whose work is both critically acclaimed and widely performed, who has also distinguished himself as an instrumental soloist and chamber musician. In particular, Musto has been hailed as the “leading vocal composer of his generation,” and “perhaps also the leading one of opera” by *Fanfare* magazine, and as a composer who “wraps [his] arms around many musical styles even as [the music] delivers on its own appealing, colourful and moving terms” (*Gramophone* magazine), who “spins flaxen pop into golden art” (*New York Newsday*.) Each of his four operas has been produced multiple times, and each has been commercially recorded (for the Albany, Bridge and Wolf Trap Opera labels.) In the season just past, *Bastianello* (“...magical, heartbreaking” – *Washington Post*) was presented by Rochester Lyric Opera and also by SUNY Fredonia, while *Later the Same Evening* (“...magnificently rendered ensembles...” – *Washington Post*) was given at Central City Opera. This season, *Later the Same Evening* travels to Northwestern University, and *The Inspector* will have a new staging in Houston. In addition to *Rhoda and the Dinosaur Hunt*, 2017 will also see the premieres of a new song cycle by Musto for Philadelphia’s LyricFest, and of a major work for Chanticleer, San Francisco’s acclaimed male vocal ensemble.

Eric Einhorn (Librettist, *Rhoda and the Fossil Hunt* | Co-Founder and General & Artistic Director, On Site Opera) has been praised by *The Austin Chronicle* as “a rising star in the opera world” and by *Opera News* for his “keen eye for detail and character insight.” He is the co-founder of On Site Opera, a company dedicated to immersive, site-specific productions. Mr. Einhorn has directed productions for Chicago Lyric Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Ft. Worth Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Florentine Opera, Austin Lyric Opera, Utah Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, the Pacific Symphony, and Gotham Chamber Opera. He has been a member of the stage directing staff at the Metropolitan Opera since 2005. *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* named Mr. Einhorn’s production of *Dialogues des Carmélites* for Pittsburgh Opera one of the top ten classical music performances of 2011. He originally created the production for Austin Lyric Opera in 2009 and was awarded “Best Opera” at the Austin Critics’ Table Awards in addition to garnering him a nomination for “Best Director.” Upcoming engagements include the world premiere of *Happy Birthday, Wanda June* with Indianapolis Opera, a revival staging of *Simon Boccanegra* starring Plácido Domingo at the Metropolitan Opera, and a new staging of *The Flying Dutchman* for Austin Opera.

About the Partners:

About On Site Opera:

Embarking on its sixth season of producing immersive site-specific opera, On Site Opera (OSO) has established itself as one of New York City’s most imaginative, nimble opera companies by doing more than simply staging musically and dramatically rich works outside of the opera house. OSO’s team of General & Artistic Director, Eric Einhorn, Music Director, Geoffrey McDonald, and Executive Director & Producer, Jessica Kiger have pushed the boundaries of operatic storytelling, producing operas in locations that allow singers and audiences alike to immerse themselves in the narrative. Reviewing the first chapter of *The Figaro Project*, in which OSO is staging lesser-known operatic adaptations of French playwright Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais’ (1732-1799) famed trilogy of Figaro plays, Anthony Tommasini of *The New York Times* wrote, “This visionary company could be on to something big.” He also noted that the “space proved ideal for the intrigues of the opera.” Founded in 2012, OSO is dedicated to producing site-specific opera in non-traditional venues throughout New York. OSO molds its productions to specific locations using physical space to create an environment in which the concept, storytelling, music, and performers unite to form an immersive, cohesive, and meaningful whole. OSO, a registered 501(c)(3), is a proud member of Opera America and the New York Opera Alliance. www.osopera.org

About Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Lyric Unlimited:

Lyric Unlimited, a division of Lyric Opera of Chicago, offers a multifaceted program of education, community engagement and artistic initiatives. The purpose of Lyric Unlimited is to provide a relevant cultural service to

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communities throughout the Chicago area, including communities for whom opera and opera companies have been largely irrelevant; to explore a wide range of ways in which Lyric can collaborate with cultural and community organizations throughout the area; and to advance the development of opera, exploring ways in which opera as an art form can resonate more powerfully, and in a range of different ways, with people of multiple backgrounds, ethnicities, and interests. In the 2015/16 season, 94,386 individuals participated in Lyric Unlimited programs. www.lyricopera.org

About Pittsburgh Opera:

Pittsburgh Opera celebrates its 78th season in 2016-17. Established by five intrepid women in 1939, Pittsburgh Opera is viewed as one of the most vibrant opera organizations in the U.S., with a rich artistic tradition, outstanding educational programs, an acclaimed artist training program, and a progressive outlook toward the future. Pittsburgh Opera is unveiling the world premiere of Daniel Sonenberg's *The Summer King* – the Josh Gibson story – in 2017, and Mohammed Fairouz's *Bhutto* in 2018. Its green initiative culminated in LEED® Silver certification for its Strip District headquarters, and its capacity as a true community partner has increased significantly under General Director Christopher Hahn's leadership. www.pittsburghopera.org

About American Museum of Natural History (AMNH.ORG):

The American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869, is one of the world's preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. The Museum encompasses 45 permanent exhibition halls, including the Rose Center for Earth and Space and the Hayden Planetarium, as well as galleries for temporary exhibitions. It is home to the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial, New York State's official memorial to its 33rd governor and the nation's 26th president, and a tribute to Roosevelt's enduring legacy of conservation. The Museum's five active research divisions and three cross-disciplinary centers support approximately 200 scientists, whose work draws on a world-class permanent collection of more than 33 million specimens and artifacts, as well as specialized collections for frozen tissue and genomic and astrophysical data, and one of the largest natural history libraries in the world. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, it is the only American museum authorized to grant the Ph.D. degree and the Master of Arts in Teaching degree. Annual attendance has grown to approximately 5 million, and the Museum's exhibitions and Space Shows can be seen in venues on five continents. The Museum's website and collection of apps for mobile devices extend its collections, exhibitions, and educational programs to millions more beyond its walls. Visit amnh.org for more information.

For more information, please contact Blake Zidell or Ron Gaskill at Blake Zidell & Associates, 718.643.9052, blake@blakezidell.com or ron@blakezidell.com. For information on the American Museum of Natural History, please contact Aubrey Miller at amiller@amnh.org or 212-496-3409.