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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Opera Lafayette performs *Treasures from The Paris Opéra Comique*  
Sunday, May 11 at 6:30 p.m. in the West Garden Court of  
The National Gallery of Art**

*Concert features music from Pierre Alexandre Monsigny's *Le Déserteur* and  
Félicien David's *Lalla Roukh**

Washington, D.C. — **Opera Lafayette**, known for its performances of 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century French opera repertoire, will explore two rarely heard 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century musical gems in a free public concert on Mother's Day, **Sunday, May 11, 2008**, as part of the **National Gallery of Art's** sixty-sixth concert season. The program is free and open to the public. Seating is on a first-come, first served basis, and will begin at 6:00 pm in the Gallery's **West Garden Court**. The entrance to the West Building, at **Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue, NW**, will remain open until the concert begins at **6:30 p.m.**

Though little known today, Monsigny's *Le Déserteur* (1769) and David's *Lalla Roukh* (1862) both originated in the French popular opera tradition known as the *opéra comique*. This tradition, which grew out of the entertainments of the Parisian fairs in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century,

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matured into a unique genre which spoke to the lives and passions of the middle classes, in contrast to the grander offerings on mythological and historical subjects enjoyed by the upper classes at the Paris Opera.

*Le Déserteur* was also a popular opera in post-revolutionary America, with performances in many cities on the East Coast in the 1790's, and regular performances at the New Orleans Opera in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Opera Lafayette will present the modern American premiere of this opera in Washington, D.C. and New York City in January and February 2009. At the May 11 concert, Opera Lafayette will reintroduce music from this opera to Washington audiences after a 170-year absence from the American stage.

Artistic Director and violinist Ryan Brown will lead a period instrument string quartet, pianist Jeffrey Watson and four emerging singers - sopranos Adria McCulloch and Meghan McCall, tenor Eric Sampson, and baritone Darren Perry - in this performance. Now in the early stages of their professional careers, these four singers are graduates of the Maryland Opera Studio at the University of Maryland, and are participating in Opera Lafayette's Young Artists Program this season. Supported by a grant from The Nancy Peery Marriott Foundation, this program offers young artists opportunities to develop their 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century operatic repertoire by singing in chorus and minor roles on stage along side established major voices, covering principal roles, and participating in recording projects for Naxos.

For more information on The National Gallery of Art concert series and to request group reservations for ten or more, please call (202) 712-7454.

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Opera Lafayette's upcoming 2008-2009 season information will be available online at [www.operalafayette.org](http://www.operalafayette.org) in June. Opera Lafayette receives support from AREVA, Inc., Pernod Ricard USA, Constellation Energy, The MARPAT Foundation, The Nancy Peery Marriott Foundation, GoDaddy, Quatt Associates, and over 200 individuals whose generosity makes possible the ensemble's performance season.

**Opera Lafayette** is a period instrument ensemble based in Washington, DC, dedicated to performances of 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century operas, particularly the French repertoire. Since its debut in 1995, Opera Lafayette has garnered both critical acclaim and a loyal following for its concert and staged opera productions with well-known American and international artists, as well as for its collaborations with The New York Baroque Dance Company, the leading baroque dance group in this country. Opera Lafayette has presented one modern world premiere, *Zélindor, roi des Sylphes* by Rebel and Francoeur, and two modern American premieres, Sacchini's *Oedipe à Colone* and Lully's *Acis et Galatée*. Its New York City debut at Rose Theater, Frederick P. Rose Hall, home of Jazz at Lincoln Center, in October 2007 was noted by *The New York Times* for "the crisp, resilient playing of the period orchestra, bringing the lilting dance music to colorful life." *The Washington Post* characterized the ensemble as "one of the most intellectually exciting fixtures of the Washington music world." Opera Lafayette records for Naxos and its discography includes Gluck's *Orphée et Euridice* (released in 2005), Sacchini's *Oedipe à Colone* (2006), and Rameau Operatic Arias (2007). They will be followed by Lully's *Armide* (2008) and Rebel and Francoeur's *Zélindor, roi des Sylphes* (2009).

**Ryan Brown** is the conductor and artistic director of Opera Lafayette. His vivid interpretations of operas from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the classical French repertoire in particular, have received the highest praise from critics in the United States and abroad. *The Washington Post* called his leading the ensemble at its debut at Music Center at Strathmore in October 2007 "brilliant" and remarked on his "authority, dramatic intensity and willing musicianship" conducting Lully's *Armide*. His exploration of rarely heard baroque operas and recordings with Naxos have received rave notices from *FANFARE*, France's *ClassicsToday.com*, England's *Gramophone*, *OPERA*, and *OPERA NOW*, and Germany's *Das Opernglas* magazines. Prior to establishing Opera Lafayette in 1995 and turning his attention to conducting, Mr. Brown had a successful career as violinist and chamber musician. He toured the U.S., Europe, and Japan, and, with The Four Nations Ensemble, made six highly praised recordings of baroque and classical music for the London-based Gaudeamus label.

**Adria McCulloch's** rich soprano voice has been described as "world class" by the *Washington Post*. She has performed Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* with Maryland Opera Studio, the title role in Gluck's *Armide* with the Maryland Opera Studio and Opera Lafayette and Une Bergère in Lully's *Armide* with Opera Lafayette. She has also performed with Calgary Opera and Opera NUOVA in Edmonton, has sung in recitals across western Canada, and has appeared with the Regina Symphony and the Calgary Philharmonic.

**Meghan McCall** has been praised for her "bell-like clarity and fine control" and "radiant full-bodied voice" in *The Washington Post*. The young American soprano's career has already taken her to stages in

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the United States and Europe where she has performed the roles of Fatime in Carl Maria von Weber's *Abu Hassan*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Madame Altina in *La Divina* by Pasatieri, Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*, and Musetta in *La Bohème*. Upcoming engagements include Eve in Haydn's *Creation* with the University of Maryland Symphony Orchestra and in Bach's *Coffee Cantata* with the acclaimed bass baritone François Loup and Harmonious Blacksmith.

Tenor **Eric Sampson** has performed many roles including Bénédict in *Béatrice and Bénédict*, Laurie in *Little Women*, and the title role in Massenet's *Werther*. He recently performed the role of Sheldon Segal in the world premiere performance of John Musto's opera, *Later that Same Evening*, at the University of Maryland. He was a winner of the Washington, D.C. District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 2006, and was recently seen as a member of the Tulsa Opera Young Artists. Other engagements include performing the role of Gastone and covering the role of Alfredo in Opera Cleveland's production of *La Traviata*. He has also performed with the Spoleto Festival USA, New Jersey Opera Theatre, the New Jersey Symphony and the New York Philharmonic.

Baritone **Darren Perry** has received praise for his powerful vocal ability, flawless musicianship, and compelling performances. In November 2006 he was hailed by *The Washington Post* as "an outstanding Don Giovanni, by turns charming and disgusting, vocally strong and a fine actor." He is a two-time winner of the Washington, D.C. District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and has received two encouragement awards at the regional level. Last season he debuted with Opera Cleveland as Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*, and Mr. Lindquist in *A Little Night Music*. In addition to performing the title role in *Don Giovanni* with the Maryland Opera Studio, he has performed Hidroat in *Armide* with the Maryland Opera Studio and Opera Lafayette.

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