



**INNOVATIVE OAKLAND OPERA THEATER  
RETURNS WITH IGOR STRAVINSKY'S  
"L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT" AND "RENARD"  
October 23<sup>rd</sup> – November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008**

OAKLAND (18 September 2008) – **Oakland Opera Theater**, applauded by critics and audiences for its intimately staged, professionally produced performances of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century operas, will present audiences with a breathtaking look at celebrated composer Igor Stravinsky's masterpieces, **L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT** and **RENARD: TALE OF THE VIXEN AND THE COCK**. Originally penned in 1918 with a WWI setting, **L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT** ("A Soldier's Tale") will be reset in the Iraq War, providing a thoroughly modern take on this Faustian tale of a soldier who trades his violin to the devil in exchange for riches and power. This work will be followed by **RENARD**, a one-act barnyard fairytale featuring both burlesque dancers and circus performers. Featuring choreography from the Vau de Vire Society's **Shannon Gaines**, both pieces will be directed by **Oakland Opera Theater** Artistic Director **Tom Dean**, and will include a stellar cast including tenors **Ben Jones** and **Darron Flagg**, baritone **Igor Vieira**, and bass **Richard Mix**. **L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT** and **RENARD** play **October 23-November 2 (press opening October 25)** at the Oakland Metro Operahouse, 630 3rd Street (three blocks from Jack London Square). For tickets (\$25 advance; \$32 at the door) and information the public may call **510-763-1146** or visit **www.oaklandopera.org**.

**L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT** ("A Soldier's Tale") was first performed during WWI in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1918 and was written for a small ensemble to compensate for a lack of players due to so many being enlisted in the armed forces at that time. This parable tells the story of a deserting soldier who exchanges his fiddle with the devil for a book that predicts the future of the economy. With an updated libretto by award-winning British playwright **Rebecca Lenkiewicz**, Oakland Opera Theater's Artistic Director Tom Dean resets the work in the Iraq War, giving today's audiences a fresh look at the deserting soldiers and his desire for an easy out of what appears to him to be a senseless war. The small cast of **L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT** includes **Ben Jones** as the Soldier, **Matthias Bossi** as the Devil, and **Kirya Traber** as the Narrator.

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## OAKLAND OPERA THEATER “L’HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT” AND “RENARD”

Largely a dance piece, **RENARD: TALE OF THE VIXEN AND THE COCK** is a one-act barnyard burlesque fairy tale based on Russian folktales. In this Russian folktale-based circus spectacle, Renard the Fox tricks several other barnyard animals, but pays a severe price for his antics. Renard the Fox deceives the Cock, the Cat, and the Goat, but eventually, is caught and executed by the other animals, and a celebration ensues, with much dancing and singing. Commissioned in 1915 by the Princess Edmond de Polignac, Stravinsky was hired to create an amusing piece that could be played for the princess in her private salon. The work was completed in 1916, and through it Stravinsky pioneered a new form of theatre in which acrobatic dance was combined with singing. For unknown reasons, the piece was never performed for the princess in her salon; it did not premiere until 1922 in Paris. **Oakland Opera Theater** will create a visually stunning presentation of this morality tale with the use of both burlesque dancers and circus performers, including juggler/acrobat **David Hunt** as the Rooster, circus artist/acrobat **Breonna Noack** as the Lady Fox, aerial hoop dancer **Erin Schrader** and circus performer/dancer **Jodi Power** as the Cat and the Goat, and burlesque dancers **Abigail Munn, Artemis Anderson, Christie Welter, Sarah Moss** completing the ensemble. Singing the work will be **Richard Mix** (bass), **Igor Vieira** (baritone), and **Darron Flagg** and **Ben Jones** (tenors) as the vocal ensemble.

**Ben Jones** will be making his Oakland Opera Theater debut as both the Soldier in **L’HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT**, in addition to lending his singing talents to **RENARD**. Jones has been featured in operas, concerts, and musical theater productions with the Eastlight Theatre of Illinois, Oakland East Bay Symphony, San Francisco Concert Chorale, and Broadway By the Bay, where he starred in the recent hit, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. **Matthias Bossi**, the Devil in **L’HISTOIRE**, is the drummer/orator for Rock-Against-Rock pioneers Sleepytime Gorilla, and was a member of the garbage-rock juggernaut Skeleton Key. He has collaborated with well-known musicians Tom Waits, Jon Langford, and Zeena Parkins, as well as with Erika Schuch, Jo Kreiter, and Joe Goode in theater. Rounding out the cast of **L’HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT** as the Narrator is **Kirya Traber**. An acclaimed spoken word artist, Traber brings her raw, bold honesty to this challenging production. A former National Teen Poetry Slam Champion, she has been featured at Robert Redford’s Sundance Summit, the Living Word Festival, and the Stern Grove Festival, as well starring in the lead role of **BULRUSHER** with the Shotgun Players, the Pulitzer Prize-nominated play written by Eisa Davis.

Featuring **Darron Flagg** and the aforementioned **Ben Jones** as tenors, **Igor Vieira** as baritone, and **Richard Mix** as the bass, **RENARD** is a delightful blend of song and dance. Flagg gained notoriety for

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## OAKLAND OPERA THEATER “L’HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT” AND “RENARD”

his stirring portrayal of Elijah Muhammed in **Oakland Opera Theater’s** 2006 production of *Malcolm X*, winning praise from critics and audiences alike, while operatic veterans Mix and Vieira have wowed audiences with their classical performances with Bay Area theater companies such as West Bay Opera, Berkeley Opera, and San Francisco Lyric Opera. **David Hunt**, who stars as the Rooster, is a circus performer who has worked with the New Pickle Circus, Zoppe Family Circus, Bindlestiff Family Variety Arts Inc., and Circus Von Amberg. His formal stage credits include the premiere of *Four Joans and a Fire-eater*, *Waiting for Godot*, and he has collaborated on productions of *Barnum!* and *Pagliacci*. Also featured is **Breonna Noack** as the Lady Fox. The first-born child of a bank-robber, Noack was voted by her graduating class as the most likely to run away and join the circus, which she promptly did. She has performed all over North America and Europe as a circus artist, and will be making her Oakland Opera Theater debut. Rounding out this talented ensemble are performers **Erin Schrader**, **Jodi Power**, **Abigail Munn**, **Artemis Anderson**, **Christi Welter**, and **Sarah Moss**.

Acclaimed choreographer **Shannon Gaines** began her career in Southern California as a competitive artistic gymnast, and later an elite-level rhythmic gymnast. She is co-founder and choreographer of the **Vau de Vire Society** in San Francisco, winner of the Bay Guardian's 2008 Best of the Bay Award (Best Circus Troupe). The Vau de Vire Society has choreographed groups including the Dresden Dolls, Peaches, Angelo Moore of Fishbone, and the Alkaline Trio's music video "Burn." In collaboration with local favorites Rosin Coven and VdV, she has re-created Edward Gorey stories live every year for the annual San Francisco Edwardian Ball (also 2008 Best of the Bay). Shannon also serves as choreographer for City Circus, a performance program for teens and young adults at Acrosports in San Francisco.

Igor Stravinsky, composer, pianist, and conductor was one the most influential composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, his compositions were noted for their stylistic diversity. His ability to fuse differing musical styles within the “classical” genre was particularly pointed and he pioneered innovative techniques that were credited with eliciting deep emotional reactions from audiences. Stravinsky’s career can generally be divided into three stylistic periods: Russian, neoclassical, and serial, with works his works for ballet and symphony as those most remembered, including *The Firebird*, *Le Sacre du Printemps* (its premiere produced an impassioned riot from the audience), *Les Noces*, *Petrushka*. Born in Russia, he moved to Paris in 1920 to attend the world premiere of his ballet *The Firebird*, commissioned by Diaghilev, after which he decided to stay in the west and shortly thereafter moved to Switzerland, where he remained throughout WWI. It was here that he wrote both L’HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT and RENARD.

**FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

- WHAT:** **Oakland Opera Theater**, applauded by local critics and audiences for its intimately staged, professionally produced performances of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century operas, presents Igor Stravinsky’s masterpieces, **L’HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT** and **RENARD: TALE OF THE VIXEN AND THE COCK**. Originally penned in 1918 with a WWI setting, **L’HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT** (“A Soldier’s Tale”) will be reset in the Iraq War, providing a thoroughly modern take on this Faustian tale of a soldier who trades his violin to the devil in exchange for riches and power. This work will be followed by **RENARD**, a one-act barnyard burlesque fairytale featuring both burlesque dancers and circus performers. In this Russian folktale-based circus spectacle, Renard the Fox tricks several other barnyard animals, but pays a severe price for his antics. Featuring choreography from the Vau de Vire Society’s **Shannon Gaines**, both pieces will be directed by Oakland Opera Theater Artistic Director **Tom Dean**, and will include a stellar cast including tenors **Ben Jones** and **Darron Flagg**, baritone **Igor Vieira**, and bass **Richard Mix**.
- DATES:** Previews: October 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>  
(*Press Opening: October 25<sup>th</sup>*)  
Closes: November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008
- SHOWS:** **October 23<sup>rd</sup> – November 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
Thursdays- Saturdays at 8pm; Sundays at 2pm
- WHERE:** **Oakland Metro Operahouse**  
630 3rd Street  
(Three blocks from Jack London Square)
- TICKETS:** For tickets (\$25 advance, \$32 at the door) the public can call **510-763-1146** or visit **[www.oaklandopera.org](http://www.oaklandopera.org)**

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