

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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For Immediate Release

**U of M School of Music's University Opera Theatre to Present
The Minnesota Premiere of The New American Opera *Elmer Gantry*,
Composer and Librettist to Visit the Twin Cities,
J.D. Steele to Perform the Role of The Revival Singer**

Minneapolis, MN (11/9/2010)—The University of Minnesota School of Music's University Opera Theatre will present the Minnesota premiere of Robert Aldridge's new American opera *Elmer Gantry* at Ted Mann Concert Hall (2128 4th St. S., Minneapolis, MN 55455). Performances will begin at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, November 18 through Saturday, November 20 and at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, November 21. Pre-show discussions with composer Robert Aldridge and librettist Herschel Garfein will take place in the Ted Mann Concert Hall Lobby from Thursday, November 18 through Saturday, November 20 at 6:45 p.m.

Tickets: \$20 general admission; \$10 for U of M students; group rates available. Call 612/624-2345 or visit www.opera.umn.edu. Two for one tickets for University students, faculty, staff, retirees and alumni.

J.D. Steele of The Steeles will perform the role of the Revival Singer. Composer Robert Aldridge and librettist Herschel Garfein will visit the Twin Cities for *Elmer Gantry*'s Minnesota premiere and are available for interviews. An *Elmer Gantry* Open Forum Discussion featuring Aldridge and Garfein with guests from U of M Creative Writing, the American Composers Forum, and the U of M School of Music will take place in the School of Music's Ferguson Hall, Room 99 (2106 Fourth Street South, Minneapolis, MN 55455) on Friday, November 19 from 3-5 p.m. This Open Forum is free and open to the public.

Robert Aldridge's *Elmer Gantry* is closely based on Pulitzer prize-winning author Sinclair Lewis' controversial 1927 satire of evangelical religion and revivalism. *Elmer Gantry* is a powerful new opera, which resonates strongly in our own times. Even more striking is that its success, since the premiere in Nashville, TN in 2007, has come about without the advantages of a consortium arrangement with national opera companies but rather on its own merits and to impressive national acclaim. The eponymous title character is a charismatic and galvanizing

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figure, in many ways iconically American, and his rise to power, as well as his relationship with the spiritual revival preacher, Sharon Falconer, is both fascinating and deeply disturbing. Filled with glorious choral scenes and stunning musical ensembles, *Elmer Gantry* is a compelling piece of music drama and University Opera Theatre is thrilled to be only the fourth producer of what is destined to be one of the great American operas!

David Walsh, University Opera Theatre Director and School of Music professor, will direct and Mark Russell Smith, School of Music professor and Artistic Director of Orchestral Studies, will conduct.

Parking is available in the 21st Ave. ramp, one block southwest of the concert hall. Photographs available upon request. Email requests for photographs to marsh396@umn.edu. For more information on University Opera Theatre, visit opera.umn.edu.

Established in 1902, the University of Minnesota School of Music offers a dynamic, comprehensive program to more than 550 music students in undergraduate and graduate programs, led by a world-class faculty of more than 50 artists, scholars and teachers. The School of Music presents more than 400 free concerts per year. For a complete schedule of events, visit www.music.umn.edu or call (612) 626-1094 for a brochure.