

June 1, 2008

Laitman's *Early Snow* in Rising Soprano's Carnegie Debut June 18

"It is difficult to think of anyone before the public today who equals her exceptional gifts for embracing a poetic text and giving it new and deeper life through music."

(The Journal of Singing)

Lori Laitman is one of America's most prolific and widely performed composers of art song. She has composed nearly 200 songs, setting the words of classical and contemporary poets. Her cycle, *Early Snow*, to three poems by Pulitzer Prize winner Mary Oliver, will be presented as part of a program celebrating American song by rising American soprano **Courtney Huffman** in her solo recital debut at Carnegie Hall on June 18, 2009.

The cycle, commissioned by Dr. Adelaide Whitaker for soprano Jennifer Check, was completed by Laitman in 2003 and saw its premiere at the Juilliard School of Music in April 2003. It was released on Laitman's CD "**Becoming a Redwood**" in 2006 on the Albany Records label.

The poetry of Mary Oliver, in the words of Steve Brockman and John Campbell of Artsong Update online magazine "...has a psychological subtlety rarely found in romantic poets of the past. These poems... are about being fully alive in this moment and open to present experience." The poems in this cycle reflect on nature, and in speaking about these settings, Laitman says: "My goal in all settings is the primacy of the text. This means that meters shift constantly to follow the natural rhythms of the poem, melodies are structured to emphasize the most important words in a phrase, tempos are flexible and harmonies change to color the emotional content. In this way, every word in every poem is bound inextricably to the music."

Since launching her career in 1991, **Laitman's** music has been performed frequently in the U.S. and abroad. Some recent US venues include The Frye Art Music and Benaroya Hall in Seattle, WA; The Kennedy Center and The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC; Weill Recital Hall and Merkin Hall in New York, NY; and The USC Fisher Art Gallery in Los Angeles, CA. Her discography also continues to grow, with releases on Albany Records, Naxos, Channel Classics and other labels, showcasing the talents of some of today's top musicians.

Laitman recently completed her first full-length opera, "**The Scarlet Letter**," to poet David Mason's new libretto, based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's literary masterpiece. The opera was commissioned by The University of Central Arkansas and premiered on November 6, 2008, to

critical acclaim. The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette wrote of the opera: "*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.*"

Early Snow will be performed by **soprano Courtney Huffman**, the 2008 NATS Artist Award winner, in a program of works by American composers Dominick Argento, Irving Berlin, Tom Cipullo, George Gershwin, Ricky Ian Gordon, Lee Hoiby, Charles Ives, Lori Laitman and Libby Larsen. A consummate vocalist, **Huffman** made her professional operatic debut to critical acclaim in June 2008 with the Intimate Opera Company of Pasadena, California, as *Violetta* in Verdi's **La Traviata**. She reprised the role with the Bakersfield Symphony Orchestra in February 2009 and tackled the demanding role of *Teutile* in Vivaldi's **Motezuma** with the Long Beach Opera in 2009 to rave reviews. The soprano made her international debut in Shanghai and Hong-Kong in 2006, followed by a performance of Dalbavie's *Sextine Cyclus* at the Aspen Music Festival. Her repertoire includes *Betty* in Lowell Liebermann's **Miss Lonelyhearts**, *Frasquita* in **Carmen**, *Belinda* in **Dido and Aeneas**, *Drusilla* in **L'Incoronazione di Poppea**, *Zerlina* in **Don Giovanni** and *Johanna* in **Sweeney Todd**. She has appeared with the Aspen Opera Theater Center, USC Thornton School of Music Opera, and the Illinois Opera Theatre, among others. **Courtney Huffman** is scheduled to perform a winner's recital at the NATS National Convention in Salt Lake City, UT in July 2010.

Courtney Huffman's Carnegie Hall Debut Solo Recital, with pianist Tali Tadmor.

Date: Thursday, June 18 at 8:00 PM

Place: Weill Recital Hall (Carnegie Hall)

Address: 154 W. 57th Street, New York, NY 10019