



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 2015

Contact: Susan Bardack

(518) 867-7940

susan@buzzmediasolutions.com

**OPERA SARATOGA AND WORDS AFTER WAR JOINTLY PRESENT
WRITING WORKSHOP FOR CIVILIANS, VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES IN
CONJUNCTION WITH THE WORLD PREMIERE OF *THE LONG WALK* OPERA**

**JULY WORKSHOP WILL BE TAUGHT BY AWARD WINNING AUTHORS
BRIAN CASTNER AND MATT GALLAGHER**

(Saratoga Springs, NY) – Opera Saratoga, in partnership with the literary organization Words After War, will present a writing workshop to civilians, veterans and military families on July 11 and July 12, 2015 at The New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, NY. The two-day event will be held in conjunction with the world premiere of *The Long Walk*, by Composer Jeremy Howard Beck and Librettist Stephanie Fleischmann. The opera is based upon the critically acclaimed memoir of war and homecoming by Brian Castner.

The two-day intensive writing workshop will focus on stories of the military, conflict, and coming home from overseas. Authors Brian Castner and Matt Gallagher will guide participants through multiple writing and feedback sessions. *The Long Walk* is a deeply personal exploration of Castner's return from Iraq where he served as an officer in an Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit and his battle with what he calls "the Crazy" as he tried to reintegrate into his family life upon returning from the war. After leaving the active military, Castner became a consultant and contractor, training Army and Marine Corps units prior to their tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. His writing has appeared in a number of national and regional publications, including Wired, The New York Times, The Daily Beast, The Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, Foreign Policy, Publisher's Weekly, and Garry Trudeau's The

Sandbox anthology. Matt Gallagher, the workshop co-presenter, is the author of the Iraq memoir *Kaboom* and co-editor of, and contributor to, the short fiction collection *Fire & Forget: Short Stories from the Long War*. He holds an MFA in fiction from Columbia University and lives in Brooklyn. His novel *Youngblood* is forthcoming from Atria/Simon & Schuster. Both authors will provide feedback and guidance to the participants.

Opera Saratoga Artistic and General Director Lawrence Edelson said, “We are honored to host Brian and Matt for this incredible workshop, which will provide writers the opportunity to work with two extraordinary mentors. Both Brian and Matt have been able to successfully share their deeply personal stories of war, through writing, with audiences around the world. Their writing has helped to build a bridge of empathy and understanding between veterans and civilians. We look forward to hosting these talented authors as they share their gifts with our community, and their guidance and encouragement with others who have stories to share.”

All civilians, veterans, military spouses, gold star children, as well as those currently serving on active, reserve or guard duty are eligible to participate. Those wishing to apply should provide two pieces of fiction, nonfiction or memoir (no more than 10,000 words total) that they wish to workshop as part of the class, as well as a short statement of purpose (no more than 250 words), explaining who they are and why they wish to participate. Deadline for applications is June 19, 2015. Space is limited to 16 students, who will be notified immediately if they have been accepted. The workshop is provided at no cost to those selected. Applications should be submitted to: info@wordsafterwar.org.

Workshop participants will be expected to submit their work for feedback, and to spend time outside of class closely reading their colleagues' work in preparation for each session. In addition, workshop participants will be provided with tickets for the opera adaptation of *The Long Walk* presented by Opera Saratoga, on either July 10th or July 13th, based on their personal availability.

Funding for this writing workshop has been generously provided by OPERA America / The Opera Fund. Lead Funding for the world premiere of *The Long Walk* has been provided by The MAP Fund, supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Aaron Copland Fund for Music.

WORKSHOP TIMES/DATES:

Saturday, July 11 – 10:00am to 1:00pm and 3:00pm – 6:00pm

Sunday, July 12 – 10:00am to 1:00pm

WORKSHOP PRESENTERS:

Matt Gallagher:

Matt Gallagher is the author of the Iraq memoir *Kaboom* and co-editor of, and contributor to, the short fiction collection *Fire & Forget: Short Stories from the Long War*. He holds an MFA in fiction from Columbia University and lives in Brooklyn. His novel *Youngblood* is forthcoming from Atria/Simon & Schuster.

Brian Castner:

Brian Castner is the author of “The Long Walk,” an Amazon Best Book of 2012 and Chautauqua Scientific & Literary Circle selection for 2013. Previously, he served as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal officer in the US Air Force from 1999 to 2007, deploying to Iraq to command bomb disposal units in Balad and Kirkuk in 2005 and 2006. After leaving the active military, he became a consultant and contractor, training Army and Marine Corps units prior to their tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. His writing has appeared in a number of national and regional publications, including *Wired*, *The New York Times*, *The Daily Beast*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek*, *Foreign Policy*, *Publisher’s Weekly*, and Garry Trudeau’s *The Sandbox* anthology. Brian lives outside of Buffalo, New York with his wife and four sons.

ABOUT WORDS AFTER WAR:

Words After War is a literary organization based in New York City with a mission to bring veterans and civilians together to examine war and conflict through the lens of literature.

ABOUT THE LONG WALK:

The Long Walk is a new opera by composer Jeremy Howard Beck and librettist Stephanie Fleischmann, which is based on Brian Castner’s critically acclaimed book of the same name. The opera is a deeply personal exploration of a soldier’s return from Iraq where he served as an officer in an Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit and his battle with what he calls “the Crazy” as he tries to reintegrate into his family life upon returning from the war. Opera Saratoga is honored to present the world premiere of *The Long Walk* in partnership with American Lyric Theater, who commissioned the opera in 2012. Internationally renowned theater and opera director David Schweizer makes his Opera Saratoga debut directing the production, with celebrated American conductor Steven Osgood on the podium. Grammy Award winning Baritone Daniel Belcher returns to Opera Saratoga to create the role of Brian, alongside mezzo-soprano Heather Johnson, who makes her company debut as his wife

Jessie. The cast also includes the company debuts of sopranos Caroline Worra and Donita Volkwijn, tenors David Blalock and Javier Abreu, and bass baritone Justin Hopkins. The design team for the production includes scenic designer Mimi Lien, costume designer Nancy Leary, and lighting designer Jeff Bruckerhoff. The production opens on July 10th, with additional performances on July 13th, 17th and 25th.

ABOUT OPERA SARATOGA:

Opera Saratoga, formerly known as Lake George Opera, began with a production of *Die Fledermaus* at the Diamond Point Theatre on July 5, 1962, playing to an audience of 230. The Company now calls Saratoga Springs home and performs for more than 25,000 people annually. Opera Saratoga serves the communities of Saratoga Springs, the Lower Adirondack and New York State Capital areas by providing access to world-class opera through the production of an annual Summer Festival, as well as year-round activities including extensive educational programs, mentorship of emerging operatic artists, and unique opportunities for the public to experience opera in both our home theater and non-traditional venues that leverage and embrace the unique cultural, historic, and natural resources of the area. To date, the Company has performed ninety different fully-staged works by fifty-two different composers, including thirty-three works by American composers and five world-premiere productions. Throughout its history, the Company's success has been shaped by visionary leaders, talented artists, and critically acclaimed productions. In 2014, the Board of Directors appointed Lawrence Edelson as the new Artistic and General Director. Edelson's leadership marks a new chapter in the company's history, plans for which include greatly expanded community partnerships throughout the year, diversification of the company's repertoire, and a reaffirmed commitment to both the presentation of American opera and the mentorship of emerging artists as core activities in the company's programs each season. The 2015 summer season marks the first festival under his leadership. For more information, visit www.operasaratoga.org.

###