

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**2007 OPERA America *Bravo!* Award Winners Announced
Four Opera Companies, Three Corporations,
and One Individual to be Honored
For Distinguished Service at Opera Conference 2007**

New York, NY—OPERA America, the national service organization for opera, announces winners of the 2007 *Bravo! Awards*. These honors, awarded annually, recognize opera companies that build community awareness of the art form via innovative projects, media organizations that demonstrate a strong commitment to promoting it, and corporations that strengthen the field through corporate philanthropy. Awards are also presented to outstanding individual educators and artists. Nominations for the awards were accepted from Professional Company Members of OPERA America, with winners chosen by an independent panel. Awards will be presented on Saturday, April 28th, in Miami's Carnival Center for the Performing Arts at Opera Conference 2007.

Marc A. Scorca, President and CEO of OPERA America stated, "The *Bravo!* Honorees have all done extraordinary work to promote understanding and appreciation of opera in their communities, demonstrating that the art form in the 21st century is a vital part of our contemporary culture. With today's innovative stagings, the wide-spread use of projected titles, new and ever-evolving technologies, increased numbers of new works, and reinterpretations of the classics all make opera-going an experience for all audiences that transcends music and theater."

Winners of the 2007 *Bravo! Awards* include:

- **Diversity Award**, honoring an OPERA America company engaged in a unique and innovative program that increases diversity in opera.
 - Opera Colorado

- **Success Awards**, honoring opera companies that are engaged in bold and innovative endeavors to increase public awareness of the art form in their communities.
 - Fort Worth Opera
 - Metropolitan Opera
- **Special Award** recognizing an individual artist who has displayed exceptional commitment as a public advocate for opera and a particular opera company.
 - The Board and staff of New Orleans Opera.
- **Business of the Year Awards**, for outstanding and exceptional support of opera companies and the art form.
 - University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), nominated by Pittsburgh Opera
- **Spotlight on Opera Awards**, highlighting media organizations that have offered outstanding support and coverage of opera.
 - Calgary Herald, nominated by Calgary Opera
 - WEAR-TV, nominated by Pensacola Opera
- **Educator of the Year Award**, honoring a teacher who has demonstrated a strong commitment to using opera in a K-12 classroom.
 - Erich Knapp, nominated by The Minnesota Opera

Details on each award follow, along with additional local press contacts. Judges for the 2007 Bravo! Awards were Ed Harsh, Vice-President of Meet the Composer, Laura Johnson, Executive Director of Programming and Concert Administration for Jazz at Lincoln Center, and Thomas R. Michel, Managing Director of Marketing for New York City Ballet.

For more information on Opera Conference 2007, visit the OPERA America website at www.operaamerica.org/conference or call OPERA America at 212-796-8620, ext. 217.

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OPERA AMERICA 2007 BRAVO! AWARDS

Diversity Award

Opera Colorado is honored with the Diversity Award for outreach activities related to the newly commissioned children's opera *La Curandera*, a chamber opera with Hispanic themes. Composed by Robert Xavier Rodríguez, and with libretto by Mary Medrick, *La Curandera* presented Opera Colorado with an opportunity to introduce an under-served Hispanic community to the process by which an opera is created. Opera Colorado presented a week-long series of free public events designed to create awareness, educate the public about opera, and generate interest in the world premiere of *La Curandera*. Events included open rehearsals, master classes, meet the composer discussions, meet the artists discussions, and a fiesta evening focused on interactive activities for families followed by a musical preview of the work. Initiating new, and building on existing relationships with local Hispanic organizations, Opera Colorado also formed an advisory committee with prominent Latino leaders in Denver. This committee was instrumental in helping develop new relationships with local Hispanic media outlets to promote the project. Overall attendance for *La Curandera* was approximately 75% of capacity, with the opening and closing performances being sold at 100% and 96% respectively.

Success Awards

Fort Worth Opera for *Leadership FWOpera*

The main goal of Leadership *FWOpera* is to encourage young leaders in the Fort Worth community to be highly active in the arts. These leaders learn why it is important to participate as board members, donors, and subscribers. The group consists of doctors, financial planners, a foundation manager, oil and gas executives, and other professions—all of whom are new to opera. Members of Leadership *FWOpera* are required to make an annual donation to the company's general operating fund, purchase season tickets, and attend several social functions designed to inform them about the world of opera and what is entailed in being an arts patron. Additionally, each member serves as an ex-officio member on board committees in their area of expertise. In five years, participation in the program has increased from five members to forty, with eight of the forty currently serving as full members of the board of trustees.

Metropolitan Opera for *Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD*

In December 2006, the Metropolitan Opera launched *Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD*, a series of six live opera performances shown in high definition in movie theaters throughout North America, Europe and Japan. The performances are playing to sold-out movie houses, prompting many theaters to schedule encore showings. By June 2007, the Met estimates that the series, including encores and international venues, will have sold more than 500,000 tickets. The series has been such a success that the Met has announced a new season of broadcasts for the 2007-2008 season with a total of eight productions for broadcast. The impact on regional opera companies and the U.S. opera-going public has been significant with many companies hosting the transmissions as an effort to build their local audiences.

Special Award: New Orleans Opera

OPERA America's Artist Advocate Award recognizes an individual artist who has displayed exceptional commitment as a public advocate for the art form and a particular opera company. This year, New Orleans Opera submitted several nominations for this award. In considering the nominations, the panel felt that each of the artists named by New Orleans Opera had made admirable contributions to the company's well-being, particularly following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

In the aftermath of Katrina, an act of extraordinary generosity led the way for the rebirth of the cultural arts in New Orleans. Internationally-acclaimed tenor Plácido Domingo hosted a gala concert, *A Night for New Orleans*, in March 2006. The concert presented many world-renowned artists including Raymond Aceto, Jeanne-Michèle Charbonnet, Elizabeth Futral, Denyce Graves, Paul Groves, Nathan Gunn, Richard Leech, Daniela Mack, Anthony Michaels-Moore, Chauncey Packer, and Frederica von Stade. The concert was enormously successful attracting an audience of 7,500. Because of New Orleans Opera's resilience and commitment to resurrecting the art form following Katrina, the panel decided to award this year's Artist Advocate Award to the company's entire board and staff.

Business of the Year Award

Business of the Year Awards honor corporations dedicated to strengthening the field of opera through corporate philanthropy and engagement with opera companies. This year, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), was selected to receive this award.

UPMC not only made the single largest corporate gift ever to Pittsburgh Opera (in support of the acclaimed Francesca Zambello production of *Billy Budd*) but also became an important regional advocate for opera. UPMC called on their state-of-the-art marketing resources to launch a campaign, *Changing the Face of Opera*.

Prior to making this remarkable gift to Pittsburgh Opera, UPMC focused all their sponsorships on athletics. However, impressed by the collaborative nature of opera production, UPMC made Pittsburgh Opera the model for future partnerships with local arts organizations including theater, ballet, and symphony. Discussions led to the realization of the many commonalities that exist between an opera company and a health services innovator, including a commitment to excellence, dedication to world-class customer service, pioneering marketing, and fiscal responsibility.

UPMC President Jeffrey Romoff recognized the challenging stereotypes opera companies face and decided to provide marketing clout on top of UPMC's already significant financial commitment to the company. At his suggestion, and with the help of UPMC's considerable resources, Pittsburgh Opera launched a regional marketing campaign to *Change the Face of Opera*. UPMC provided time, energy, and vast marketing resources, virtually doubling their sponsorship commitment, to help break down perceptions of opera as an elitist art form and position young artists as exciting to the general public. For each of Pittsburgh Opera's 2006-2007 productions, UPMC coordinated a professional photo shoot to capture the young, vibrant faces of today's opera stars. These images were translated into visually arresting advertisements that appeared in print, as well as on smartboards/billboards throughout southwestern Pennsylvania, provided free-of-charge by UPMC to Pittsburgh Opera.

Pittsburgh Opera's production of *Billy Budd* and campaign to Change the Face of Opera would not have been possible without the visionary commitment of Romoff and the support of the entire UPMC team.

Spotlight on Opera Awards

The Spotlight on Opera Awards highlight media organizations that have offered outstanding support and coverage of opera. The 2007 award recipients include the *Calgary Herald* and *WEAR-TV* in Pensacola, Florida.

Calgary Herald, nominated by Calgary Opera

The *Calgary Herald* provided significant editorial coverage and promotion of Calgary Opera's recent world premiere of the Estacio/Murrell opera *Frobisher*. As the company's major media sponsor, the *Calgary Herald* regularly supports the company annually, but the support of *Frobisher* went beyond the norm--a full week of daily stories with color photos, for which the paper created a special color graphic and title, "*Finding Frobisher*." The Herald also provided significant promotional advertising support, a community symposium of five public events based on themes explored in the opera, and a contest for a trip for two to Canada's Far North—the setting of many scenes of the opera. Due to the extensive coverage, Calgary Opera sold 95% of the seats for *Frobisher*, and attracted capacity crowds to all related community events.

WEAR-TV, nominated by Pensacola Opera

WEAR-TV, the local Pensacola ABC affiliate, has provided in-kind and small cash support for Pensacola Opera for more than five years. Additionally, each year, the station provides at least \$50,000 worth of air time at no charge to the company, as well as providing free creative services for additional opera-sponsored events outside of the mainstage season. In addition to the air time, the station provides interviews and ticket give-aways on the local morning program or the noon news show. The station's professional anchors offer their support through on-air announcements and also frequently serve as masters of ceremony at fundraising events. *WEAR-TV*'s generosity has led to greatly increased advertising exposure that has positively impacted ticket sales which has allowed the company to greatly increase its budget in the past five years.

Educator of the Year Award

Erich Knapp, the choral teacher in the Sebeka, Minnesota school district, has been working closely with The Minnesota Opera's Education Department over the last five years to develop a powerfully inspirational and educational vocal program. A small rural town located about four hours north of Minneapolis, Sebeka has a population of 710, and a school district of 540 students. Each year, Knapp picks an opera that The Minnesota Opera will be producing for detailed study in his classroom. Knapp introduces his students to the opera by singing some of the choral music as a choir, viewing various video stagings, acting out scenes from the libretto, and learning the history of the piece and the composer. These activities culminate in attendance at a live performance at The Minnesota Opera. His passion for opera combined with innovative and effective teaching, including collaborative work with The Minnesota Opera, has allowed Erich Knapp to

develop an extraordinary program in which his students see opera as exciting, dramatic, beautiful, and relevant.