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Opera News Names Fort Worth Opera's Darren K. Woods as One of Industry's Key Influencers in Next Decade

FORT WORTH, Texas – Fort Worth Opera (FWOpera) **General Director Darren K. Woods** is featured in *Opera News* magazine's August issue as one of 25 important influencers for the opera industry in the upcoming decade. In the article "Opera's Next Wave", Woods is one of only three opera company leaders featured in the list, which also includes singers, conductors, directors, and other industry professionals. After praising Woods for widening the company's approach to repertory by championing contemporary opera, the article continues, "Woods's talents extend beyond being a courageous programmer; he also has a reputation for being a strict fiscal watchdog. ...As other regional companies are collapsing under the weight of moribund programming and bad debt, Fort Worth continues to move forward. Recently, the board extended Woods's contract through 2018."

"When Darren came to Fort Worth more than a decade ago, the board knew they had found a star. During my tenure, it has been a privilege to witness firsthand his rare gift to combine an innovative artistic vision with a firm grasp of fiscal responsibility," FWO board president **Dr. Natalie Brand Murray** said, congratulating Woods on the honor. "With two world premieres behind us and two ahead of us, Darren is at the forefront of creating new opera for the twenty-first century."

As leader of Fort Worth Opera since 2001, Woods has elevated the company to a leadership role in the field of American opera, with the world premieres of Thomas Pasitieri's *Frau Margot* in 2007 and Jorge Martín's *Before Night Falls* in 2010 (both of which were released on the Albany label), and with the world premieres of Daniel Crozier's *With Blood, With Ink* and Libby Larsen's *A Wrinkle in Time* planned for future seasons. Woods' other accomplishments range from the Fort Worth Opera Studio (a year-round training program for emerging young artists) to the Opera Unbound series, the company's newly named alternative-venue chamber opera series that includes the company's past performances of Peter Eötvös' *Angels in America* (2008), Philip Glass's *Hydrogen Jukebox* (2011), Jake Heggie's *Three Decembers* (2012), plus the upcoming regional premiere of Tom Cipullo's *Glory Denied* (2013). Woods also recently established the company's new-works showcase, *Frontiers*, which will premiere in 2013 with excerpts from six to eight unpublished operas by composers from the Americas, giving lesser-known composers a platform for their works and allowing opera fans a rare peek into the creative process behind new works.

Last month, Fort Worth Opera completed its 66th season/6th Festival to critical acclaim, offering a balance of traditional and contemporary operas: Puccini's *Tosca*, Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, and the regional premieres of Mark Adamo's *Lysistrata* and Jake Heggie's *Three Decembers*. In addition to the regional premiere of Tom Cipullo's *Glory Denied* and the company's inaugural Frontiers performances, the 2013 Festival will also include Puccini's *La Bohème*, Donizetti's *Daughter of the Regiment*, and the company premiere of Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*. The 2013 Festival will run in its new time slot, April 20 – May 12, a month earlier than usual. Single tickets will be available starting August 1, 2012. For more information or tickets, visit www.fwopera.org or call 817.731.0726 or 1.877.396.7372.

ABOUT FORT WORTH OPERA: Founded in 1946, Fort Worth Opera is the oldest continually performing opera company in Texas, and one of the 14 oldest opera companies in the United States. Under the leadership of General Director Darren K. Woods since 2001, the organization has gained national attention from critics and audiences alike for its artistic quality and willingness to take risks. Known throughout the operatic world as a champion of new and rarely-performed works, the company has taken a leadership role in producing contemporary operas. In 2007, when the company changed its fall/winter schedule to a condensed one-month long Festival in the spring, FWOpera staged its first world premiere, *Frau Margot*, and followed up the next season with *Angels in America* (which resulted in *More Life: the Art and Science of AIDS*, a community-wide collaboration amongst organizations in the performing and visual arts, children's education, medicine, and social services), *Dead Man Walking* in 2009, the world premiere of *Before Night Falls* in 2010, *Hydrogen Jukebox* in 2011, and the regional premieres of Mark Adamo's *Lysistrata* and Jake Heggie's *Three Decembers* in 2012, the first time the two composers' works have been co-programmed. The company's CD recordings of *Frau Margot* and *Before Night Falls* are available on the Albany label.

Since 2007, attendance of Festival performances by out-of-town audiences has grown almost 5%. The local economy has also benefitted, with 2,100 hotel rooms alone booked for the 2012 Festival. The company has balanced its budget for the last seven consecutive years.

Established in 2002, the Fort Worth Opera Studio is a year-round training program for emerging young artists who are cast from annual national auditions. In addition to receiving professional training while in Fort Worth, the singers also perform in the Children's Opera Theatre, the company's educational program that tours fully costumed, portable operas to elementary schools. COT performances span the whole state of Texas and reach as many as 50,000 children a year, many of whom have no other access to arts education.

ABOUT FORT WORTH: Fort Worth boasts a unique mix of western culture, urban sophistication, and fine art. The city is home to world-renowned arts organizations such as the Kimbell Art Museum, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Amon Carter Museum, and the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. On the other end of the spectrum, the city sponsors daily cattle drives through its Stockyards district, hosts equestrian and livestock events throughout the year, and is home to the Cowgirl Hall of Fame. Downtown Fort Worth is a lively spot for residents and tourists; attractions include fine dining, shopping, night life, and the opera house, the acclaimed Bass Performance Hall.

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