



Kim Simon, Acting General Director
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General Director to Leave Opera Omaha

Omaha, NE - In a prepared statement, John Wehrle and Opera Omaha today announced the close of Mr. Wehrle's tenure as General Director of Opera Omaha. Mr. Wehrle stated, "I am proud of my work here and know that the company, and therefore the community, is stronger now than before I arrived. I love opera, but I am always most moved by seeing its effect on people, and I have met some wonderful people through my work for Opera Omaha."

"John has been a remarkable leader at a very crucial and challenging time. His focus on mission and creative balance of program and available resources provided exactly the rock we needed these past three years," according to Opera Omaha Board President Tim Hart. "His intelligence and coolness under fire, knowledge of industry best practices, deep ties to the world of opera, artistic judgment and uncanny ability to cast singers has helped us remain vital in very difficult economic circumstances. He has extended himself in innumerable ways to assure that the perspective of every company stakeholder – Board and Guild members, audience and donors – was heard and valued. John will be missed."

"When I arrived at Opera Omaha in November, 2007," continued Wehrle, "the company had lost Executive, Board and Artistic leaders within a very short period and was burdened with significant accumulated operating losses. As we were resolving these issues, the economic environment became much more challenging and I was forced to make some very difficult and even unpopular choices. I am happy that the result of my leadership is a stronger company that now has breathing room to think

strategically. During these strategic conversations, though, it became clear to me that implementing the Board's vision for opera in Omaha would require a leadership change. With my original agreement set to expire in November, it seems the best thing for Opera Omaha and for me is to pursue separate paths in support of the art form we love. What is important now is that Opera Omaha select a leader who will keep the company an active and creative part of this great community. I wish them every success."

Hart said that a search for Wehrle's replacement will begin immediately. Kim Simon, previous chair of the Board and Guild, will be Acting General Director.

About Opera Omaha

Opera Omaha, the only professional opera company in Nebraska, began in 1958 as the Omaha Civic Opera Society, a volunteer association, and with tremendous community support became fully professional by 1970. Opera Omaha produces a season of original mainstage productions, presented at the historic Orpheum Theater, and smaller productions and musical events throughout the community. Opera Omaha is internationally known for its productions of eight world premieres and four American premieres of classical masterpieces, and is highly regarded regionally for an extensive education and outreach program that annually reaches as many as 15,000 people from elementary school through adulthood.