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NEWS RELEASE

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**The 2016 Fort Worth Opera Festival:
A Highly-Anticipated World Premiere, a Hilarious Italian Comedy, and
a Bold Regional Premiere are Set to Thrill Audiences Next Season.**

*FWOpera to celebrate company's 70th Anniversary and 10th Festival milestone with
the long-awaited world premiere of JFK;
Rossini's delightful romantic comedy The Barber of Seville;
the Regional Premiere of Buried Alive | Embedded;
and debuts of new works by American composers
in fourth season of new works showcase Frontiers.*

FORT WORTH, TX – Fort Worth Opera (FWOpera) announced today the full lineup of works that will take the stage during the 2016 FWOpera Festival, running April 23, 2016 – May 8, 2016. Celebrating the 70th anniversary of the company as well as the 10th anniversary of the Festival, the 2016 season will showcase the compelling blend of forwarding-thinking contemporary works and classic, traditional operas that has become FWOpera's signature. Main stage productions include the world premiere of the company's much anticipated commissioned opera **JFK** by David T. Little and Royce Vavrek, together with Rossini's bubbly, comedic romp **The Barber of Seville** in its first FWOpera production since the 2002-2003 season. The company's *Opera Unbound* selection includes two brand-new, compelling one-act works **Buried Alive | Embedded** by the creative teams of Jeff Myers and Quincy Long and Patrick Soluri and Deborah Brevoort. Rounding out the Festival, will be the fourth annual installment of FWOpera's critically-acclaimed new works showcase, **Frontiers**.

In revealing the 2016 season General Director Darren K. Woods stated, "Looking back, even just the 10 years since we launched the Festival, it's amazing to see how much North Texas, Fort Worth Opera, and opera in general has changed. When we started planning the 2016 Festival years ago, I had hoped that premiering *JFK* as the culmination of our *Operas of the Americas* initiative would send a message that new, American opera deserves a permanent home in the opera world. Standing here now, we have witnessed success beyond what we imagined possible with this initiative, with the added benefit of having many other opera companies across the U.S. join us in embracing American opera. It has re-affirmed that Fort Worth Opera is now, and will continue to be, a catalyst for rejuvenating opera in our community and beyond."

Fort Worth Opera will inaugurate the anniversary Festival season and celebrate the culmination of the first phase of its *Opera of the Americas* initiative with the world premiere of *JFK* – a FWOpera and American Lyric Theater co-commission – by the acclaimed creative duo of **David T. Little** and **Royce Vavrek** (*Dog Days*). *JFK* offers an intimate portrait of President John F. Kennedy and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy on the eve of the President's fateful trip to Dallas. Set in downtown Fort Worth's historic Hotel Texas, the opera recounts moments from the couples' personal and political lives and features an impressive cast of FWOpera favorites

including baritone **Matthew Worth** as President John F. Kennedy (*Three Decembers*), **Talise Trevigne** in the role of hotel maid Clara Harris (*Hamlet*), **Sean Panikkar** as secret serviceman Henry Rathbone (*La Bohème, The Pearl Fishers*), and **Daniel Okulitch** (*Little Women, Frau Margot, Dead Man Walking*) as Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson. Mezzo soprano **Daniela Mack** will make her FWOpera debut in the poignant role of Jacqueline Kennedy, with additional debuts from **Cree Carrico** as Rosemary Kennedy and **Katharine Goeldner** as Jackie Onassis.

Thaddeus Strassberger (*Hamlet*) will return as director and set designer, while conductor **Steven Osgood** (*Hydrogen Jukebox*) will conduct the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra through Little's colorful score.

Traditional opera lovers will be rolling in the aisles as the festivities continue with Rossini's ever-popular *The Barber of Seville* in its first FWOpera production since the 2002-2003 season. Beloved for its energetic and recognizable melodies, as well as its notoriously difficult virtuosic passages, this romantic romp will feature a cast of fresh FWOpera faces.

Desperately in love, Count Almaviva — sung by **Andrew Stenson** in his FWOpera debut — is desperate to win the affections of the beautiful and charming Rosina — portrayed by **Megan Marino**, also making her FWOpera debut. Standing in the way of their happiness is Rosina's guardian and all-around curmudgeon Dr. Bartolo — sung by **Tyler Simpson** (*Così fan tutte*) — and the meddling music teacher Basilio — sung by **Kyle Albertson** in his FWOpera debut. Guiding the antics and action of the story is 2014 McCammon Voice Competition winner **Joo Wan Kang** as Almaviva's trusted confidant and barber, Figaro.

FWOpera favorite **David Gately** (*Ariadne auf Naxos, Così fan tutte, La Traviata*) will direct while FWOpera Music Director **Joe Illick** will bring Rossini's dazzling music to life.

Two additional *Opera of the Americas* productions, *Buried Alive | Embedded*, will make their regional premieres as part of FWOpera's heralded alternative venue series, *Opera Unbound*. Commissioned as part of American Lyric Theater's *Poe Project* and created under the concept of what Edgar Allen Poe would write if he were alive today, *Buried Alive | Embedded* are one-act psychological thrillers presented back-to-back in one captivating operatic experience.

Buried Alive, by **Jeff Myers** and **Quincy Long**, borrows from Poe's *The Premature Burial* and tells the story of Victor, a painter whose nightmares of death begin to become real. With **Christopher Burchett** (*Silent Night*) as Victor and FWOpera Studio Artist **Maren Weinberger** as Elena his wife, alternating realities are juxtaposed and culminate in a final gruesome ending. The ensemble cast includes performances by **Nathan Stark** as the Gravedigger, **Caroline Worra** (*Glory Denied*) as an Undertaker's Assistant, as well as FWOpera Studio Artists **Anna Lorenzo** as the Undertaker, and **Brian Wallin** as an Undertaker Assistant. Director **Lawrence Edelson** (*Hydrogen Jukebox*) returns to direct with **Tyson Deaton** (*Glory Denied*) conducting.

The second opera, *Embedded*, by **Patrick Soluri** and **Deborah Brevoort**, is taken from Poe's *The Cask of Amontillado*, and was featured during FWOpera's first annual *Frontiers* showcase in 2013. *Embedded* revolves around Sylvia Malow, an aging American news anchor sung by Caroline Worra, who finds herself on the wrong side of the headlines. Desperate to prove her value while being pushed out of her job by Victoria Reilly, a young rival sung by Maren Weinberger, Sylvia is tricked by the notorious terrorist Montessor—portrayed by Nathan Stark—into traveling to see him for an exclusive interview. The opera takes an unexpected twist and ends with a moment of triumph in face of death. Rounding out the cast is Christopher Burchett as the Producer, Brian Wallin as Rory, and Anna Lorenzo as the GPS. **Sam Helfrich** will make his FWOpera directorial debut and Tyson Deaton will once again conduct.

The final week of the 2016 Festival will feature *Frontiers*, the company's showcase for new works. Six to eight selected composers will be in residence at the Festival during the last week and their works will be presented in 20-minute performances sung by young artists of the 2016

Opera Festival and accompanied by piano. Each composer will attend the showcase and participate in an enlightening post-performance discussion. Composers will receive feedback on their work through private meetings with the *Frontiers* jury panel. In addition, the workshops will be recorded, so the composers can subsequently study the recording to assist in the completion of the compositional process. Final performances will be offered in two separate showcases of four works each on Wednesday, May 4, 2016, and Thursday, May 5, 2016.

The 2016 Fort Worth Opera Festival
April 23—May 8, 2015

JFK

Music by David T. Little; libretto by Royce Vavrek
Co-commissioned by American Lyric Theater

April 23, May 1m, May 7, 2016 (m=matinee)
World Premiere; part of *Opera of the Americas* initiative
Bass Performance Hall, downtown Fort Worth
Sung in English with supertitles in English and Spanish

CAST:

Matthew Worth (John F. Kennedy)
Daniela Mack * (Jacqueline Kennedy)
Talise Trevigne (Clara Harris)
Sean Panikkar (Henry Rathbone)
Daniel Okulitch (Lyndon B. Johnson)
Cree Carrico * (Rosemary Kennedy)
Katharine Goeldner * (Jacqueline Onassis)

ARTISTIC TEAM:

Steven Osgood, conductor
Thaddeus Strassberger, director and scenic design
Mattie Ulrich, costume design *
Chad Jung, lighting design
*denotes Fort Worth Opera debut season

The Barber of Seville

Music by Gioachino Rossini; libretto by Cesare Sterbini.

April 30, May 6, 8m, 2016 (m=matinee)
Bass Performance Hall, downtown Fort Worth
In Italian with supertitles in English and Spanish
First performance by FWOpera since the 2002-2003 season.

CAST:

Joo Wan Kang * (Figaro)
Andrew Stenson * (Count Almaviva)
Megan Marino * (Rosina)
Tyler Simpson (Don Basilio)
Kyle Albertson * (Dr. Bartolo)

ARTISTIC TEAM:

Joe Illick, conductor
David Gately, director
John Stoddart, set design *

Chad Jung, lighting design

* denotes Fort Worth Opera debut season

Buried Alive | Embedded

Buried Alive music by Jeff Myers; libretto by Quincy Long.

Embedded music by Patrick Soluri; libretto by Deborah Brevoort.

April 24m, 26, 29, 30m, May 3, 7m, 2016 (m=matinee)

Scott Theatre (inside the Fort Worth Community Arts Center)

Sung in English without supertitles

Regional premiere

BURIED ALIVE CAST:

Christopher Burchett (Victor)

Maren Weinberger (Elena)

Nathan Stark * (Gravedigger)

Anna Laurenzo * (Undertaker)

Caroline Worra (Undertaker's Assistant)

Brian Wallin (Undertaker's Assistant)

ARTISTIC TEAM:

Tyson Deaton, conductor

Lawrence Edelson, director

Zane Philstrom, set and costume design *

Katy Tucker, video design *

Josh Epstein, lighting design *

EMBEDDED CAST:

Caroline Worra (Sylvia Malow)

Nathan Stark (Montessor)

Maren Weinberger (Victoria Reilly)

Christopher Burchett (Producer)

Brian Wallin (Rory)

Anna Laurenzo * (GPS)

ARTISTIC TEAM:

Tyson Deaton, conductor

Sam Helfrich *, director

Zane Philstrom, set and costume design *

Katy Tucker, video design *

Josh Epstein, lighting design *

* denotes Fort Worth Opera debut season

Frontiers

Two separate showcases of four works each on Wednesday, May 4, 2016 at 6:00 pm and Thursday, May 5, 2016, at 6:00 pm

Schedule of 2016 Festival Performances

Saturday, April 23	7:30pm	Scott Theatre	<i>JFK</i>
Sunday, April 24	2:00 pm	Scott Theatre	<i>Buried Alive Embedded</i>
Tuesday, April 26	7:30 pm	Scott Theatre	<i>Buried Alive Embedded</i>
Friday, April 29	7:30 pm	Scott Theatre	<i>Buried Alive Embedded</i>

Saturday, April 30	2:00 pm	Scott Theatre	<i>Buried Alive Embedded</i>
Saturday, April 30	7:30 pm	Bass Hall	<i>The Barber of Seville</i>
Sunday, May 1	2:00 pm	Bass Hall	<i>JFK</i>
Tuesday, May 3	7:30 pm	Scott Theatre	<i>Buried Alive Embedded</i>
Friday, May 6	7:30 pm	Bass Hall	<i>The Barber of Seville</i>
Saturday, May 7	2:00 pm	Scott Theatre	<i>Buried Alive Embedded</i>
Saturday, May 7	7:30 pm	Bass Hall	<i>JFK</i>
Sunday, May 8	2:00 pm	Bass Hall	<i>The Barber of Seville</i>

TICKETS: Tickets for the 2016 Festival can be purchased online, by phone, or in person at the Fort Worth Opera Customer Service Office inside the Fort Worth Community Arts Center at 1300 Gendy St., Fort Worth, Texas, 76107. Season subscriptions range from \$26 to \$379 while single tickets range from \$17 to \$195 (prices subject to change). Subscriptions are available now and single tickets go on sale August 1, 2015. For more information, please visit www.fwopera.org or call 817.731.0726 or toll-free at 1.877.396.7372. To purchase tickets online, go to www.fwopera.org.

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, and *Hydrogen Jukebox* in 2011. The 2012 Festival staged the regional premieres of Mark Adamo's *Lysistrata* and Jake Heggie's *Three Decembers*, the first time the two composers' works have been co-programmed, and the 2013 season featured the regional premiere of Tom Cipullo's *Glory Denied*, as well as the inaugural season of its new works showcase, *Frontiers*, featuring works by eight composers from the Americas. Fort Worth Opera's CD recordings of *Frau Margot*, *Before Night Falls*, *Glory Denied*, and *With Blood, With Ink* are available on the Albany label.

The company's upcoming 2015 season, part of Phase One of its recently announced ten-year artistic vision ***Opera of the Americas*** — funded in part by support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation — includes the regional premiere of David T. Little and Royce Vavrek's critically acclaimed ***Dog Days***, based on the Judy Budnitz short story of the same title. Reinforcing its leadership role in contemporary opera, the 2015 Festival includes the third season of its annual new works program, ***Frontiers***, showcasing new works by composers from the Americas. The company will also feature fresh productions of Verdi's timeless tale of love and sacrifice ***La Traviata***, and Ambroise Thomas' soaring grand operatic masterwork ***Hamlet***.

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 40,000 children a year, many of whom have no other access to arts education. Since 2007, attendance of Festival performances by out-of-town audiences has grown almost 5%. The local economy has also benefitted, with over 1,900 hotel rooms booked for the 2012 Festival alone. The company has balanced its budget for the eighth consecutive year.

Fort Worth Opera is sponsored in part by awards from **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Arts Council of Fort Worth & Tarrant County, The City of Fort Worth, The National Endowment for the Arts**, and the **Texas Commission on the Arts**. Additional Fort Worth Opera sponsors include: **American**

Airlines; *Art & Seek*; Crystelle Waggoner Charitable Trust, Bank of America, Trustee; The Pangburn Foundation, J.P. Morgan Chase, Trustee; *Star-Telegram*; and WFAA Channel 8.

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