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**Fort Worth Opera's 'Community Seats Program' Makes Opera Accessible
to more than 150 underserved adults in North Texas**

New civic program awards non-profit service organizations focused on the improving the lives of Tarrant County adults tickets at an affordable price to the 2015 Fort Worth Opera Festival.

Fort Worth, Texas— Fort Worth Opera (FWOpera) General Director Darren K. Woods proudly announced today the launch of the FWOpera Community Seats Program, a new civic partnership initiative aimed to enrich the lives of adults from Tarrant County service organizations. Hosted during the three performances of *La Traviata* during the 2015 Fort Worth Opera Festival, Community Seats Program patrons will enjoy dedicated orchestra level seating in a special section consisting of fifty seats per performance. Tickets are offered to non-profit service organizations that assist underserved adult or senior citizen communities in Tarrant County at a greatly reduced rate (discount up to 95% off), removing the price barrier and making the experience of opera affordable to all.

When asked about the impetus for creating the new program General Director Darren K. Woods stated, "Fort Worth Opera has made a commitment to being a part of the community in new and different ways. I believe that art can truly change a person's life, but cost is often an obstacle. We want to remove this deterrent so that more members of our community can share in the power of opera. We are committed to making performances available to our entire community – in Bass Hall, other theaters, and in venues all over town."

In addition to the performance experience, FWOpera staff members are taking an extra step to ensure these first time opera goers are ready for the show by hosting a "Beginners Guide to Opera" session with each organization prior to their arrival at Bass Hall.

FWOpera's Director of Education Hannah Guinn added, "Opera can be an intimidating art form, especially when you've never been to one, so our educational approach at all levels is to dispel those fears. As soon as we can convince someone that the opera isn't all about tuxedos and minks, it's about watching a piece of art unfold before your eyes and ears, then that person becomes open to experiencing something truly beautiful. All human beings need beauty, not just to survive, but to thrive."

Eligible non-profit service organizations interested in participating in the Community Seats Program can apply by contacting FWOpera's Director of Education Hannah Guinn at 817-288-1219 or by email at Hannah@fwopera.org. For information regarding Festival show times, seating, and more go online to www.fwopera.org.

PROGRAM DETAILS:

Available Performances: *La Traviata* - Saturday, April 25; Sunday, May 3; and Friday, May 9

Tickets: Seats are offered on a sliding scale, based on what organizations can afford, and start as low as \$5 per ticket. (*Tickets will be awarded based on availability of seats, the needs of the organization, and the population served. Requests must come from the organization and not from individuals.*)

ABOUT LA TRAVIATA: Opening the Bass Hall season will be Verdi's masterpiece *La Traviata*. Based on *La Dame aux camellias* by Alexander Dumas and renowned for its unforgettable melodies, this timeless love story will play out against Verdi's rich orchestration and features a cast of fresh faces all making their FWOpera debuts in this traditionally staged production. Although deeply in love, the beautiful but frail Violetta Valéry—sung by Australian rising star Rachele Durkin—resigns her passionate affair with Alfredo Germont – portrayed by Patrick O'Halloran—to maintain his family's respected name. Rounding out the leading roles is Nicholas Pallesen as Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont.

FWOpera favorite David Gately (*Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Così fan tutte*) will direct, while FWOpera's Music Director Joe Illick conducts the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. *La Traviata* will also include lighting design by Fort Worth native Chad R. Jung and set and costumes by Desmond Heeley, originally designed for the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

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*, *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. In 2014, the company presented the professional world premiere of Daniel Crozier and Peter M. Krask's *With Blood, With Ink*, as well as the regional premiere of Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Silent Night*. Fort Worth Opera's CD recordings of *Frau Margot*, *Before Night Falls*, and *Glory Denied* are available on the Albany label. Fort Worth Opera's CD recordings of *Frau Margot*, *Before Night Falls*, and *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***.

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