



Media Release

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Contact: Edward Wilensky
Phone: 619.232.7636 x248
Edward.Wilensky@sdopera.com
Afterhours: 619.384.7636

San Diego Opera Names David Bennett as New General Director

Former Executive Director of Gotham Chamber Opera made mark presenting fully staged productions of rarely performed works in boldly imaginative and intimate settings

Joins San Diego Opera on June 15, 2015

San Diego, CA – (Embargoed for release: Thursday, March 12, 2015) San Diego Opera is proud to announce the appointment of **David Bennett** as the Company's new General Director. Mr. Bennett is the former Executive Director of Gotham Chamber Opera, a New York City based opera company which has made its mark in the international arts community by presenting fully staged productions, from the Baroque era to the present, in unexpected and intimate venues. With Mr. Bennett at the helm, San Diego Opera will continue to produce grand-style opera from the popular repertoire at the Civic Theatre while diversifying its offering with unexpected works in venues unique to the San Diego region.

"After an exhaustive search from an incredible pool of well qualified candidates, the Board decided overwhelmingly to select David Bennett as the Company's new General Director," shares San Diego Opera Board President Carol Lazier. "David met all of the criteria we were looking for and his artistic strength, infectious love of opera, creativity, vision and collaborative nature was the course we wanted to set for the future of our Company. David's commitment to diverse audiences and his intrinsic curiosity to find out what makes San Diego so unique was compelling to us. With David at the helm we are confident that San Diego Opera will become the opera company this city wants and deserves."

Mr. Bennett joined the Gotham Chamber Opera in 2006 and tripled the Company's operating budget while increasing the number of annual productions from one to four. The company recently commissioned the world premiere of Nico Muhly's opera "Dark Sisters" and has become recognized under Bennett's leadership for partnering with notable New York and national institutions. Recent productions and partnerships include collaborations with the Arms and

Armor Court of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for a double billing of *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda / I Have No Stories to Tell You*, and a collaboration with the American Museum of Natural History and the American Repertory Theater for a production of Hadyn's *Il mondo della luna* which featured lunar exploration video developed by the Museum and NASA and broadcast on the Hayden Planetarium's 180-degree dome. Mr. Bennett managed all areas of the Gotham Chamber Opera including Artistic, Development, Finance, Marketing and Production. As General Director of San Diego Opera he will continue to be in charge of all of these departments with his primary focus on the artistic development of the Company.

"David Bennett has emerged in recent years as one of the most creative, energetic and effective opera leaders in the country," shares Marc Scorca, President and CEO of OPERA America. "His work at Gotham Chamber Opera is a reference point for the entire field in terms of repertoire diversity, innovative productions and groundbreaking partnerships with other cultural institutions. He will approach his work in San Diego with a deep respect for the standard repertoire and a sense of adventure that will add dimension to the company's offerings and win new audiences for the company."

A singer (baritone) with an M.B.A. and an M.A. in Arts Administration from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Mr. Bennett was the Managing Director of Dance New Amsterdam, Inc. in New York City prior to joining Gotham Chamber Opera. In this role he managed the company's operations and oversaw the company's \$5.7 million capital campaign.

The appointment of Mr. Bennett to the position of General Director makes him the fourth leader of San Diego Opera, which is currently celebrating its 50th Anniversary with performances of John Adams's *Nixon in China*. He succeeds former General Director Ian Campbell (1983 – 2014), Tito Capobianco (1976 – 1983), and Company founder Walter Herbert (1950 – 1973).

"For 50 years, San Diego Opera has been a leader in the American opera industry, with a long history of artistic achievement and excellence. I am eager to work with the Board, the staff, and the rich artistic community to build upon the company's tradition of presenting grand opera, while exploring new ways to increase its impact within the San Diego region and beyond."

About David Bennett

David Bennett joined the Gotham Chamber Opera as Managing Director in July, 2006 and was named Executive Director in May, 2010. He came to Gotham from Dance New Amsterdam (DNA), Lower Manhattan's center for dance education, creation, and performance, where he served as Managing Director. While at DNA, he led a \$5.7 million capital campaign for DNA's new home and oversaw the organization's emergence as a significant producer of modern dance in New York City. Prior to DNA, Mr. Bennett was a Senior Consultant with Arts Resources International, where he provided a range of advisory services to non-profit arts organizations, including project feasibility studies, financial operating estimates, economic impact and market analyses, and fund-raising feasibility studies. Before working in Arts Administration, he enjoyed a successful career in opera, appearing as a baritone with a number of companies and orchestras throughout the United States, including The Dallas Opera, the Dallas Symphony, Skylight Opera Theater, and Florentine Opera of Milwaukee. Mr. Bennett holds both an M.B.A. and an M.A. in Arts Administration from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX and is Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors of OPERA America.

Photos of David can be found online at: <http://sandiegoopera.smugmug.com/San-Diego-Opera-General-Direct>

San Diego Opera Mission Statement

The mission of San Diego Opera is to deliver exceptional vocal performances and exciting, accessible programs to diverse audiences, focusing on community engagement and the transformative power of live performance.

San Diego Opera Vision Statement

The San Diego Opera will be recognized internationally as a leading example of adaptability, innovation and sustainability in the operatic arts, promoting diversified programming and unique performance venues with world-class and emerging talent.

San Diego Opera Core Values Statement

Through excellence in innovative programming and education, SDO provides a lasting cultural service to the community.

- Our tradition of excellence in fully staged opera is augmented with new models of opera and venues. Our unique and deep commitment to the community propels us to explore ways of increasing affordability and accessibility.
- Through fiscal responsibility and nimble adaptation to the changing marketplace, we protect the future of San Diego Opera.
- Our educational and community involvement coupled with relevant programming will build the audience of the future.

About Gotham Chamber Opera

Gotham Chamber Opera is the nation's leading opera company dedicated to vibrant, fully staged productions of works intended for intimate venues. Its high quality presentations of small-scale rarities from the Baroque era to the present have earned Gotham Chamber Opera an international reputation and unanimous critical praise. As the only company committed solely to producing chamber opera, Gotham Chamber Opera has a unique brand that is nationally recognized.

Gotham Chamber Opera History

Founded by conductor and Artistic Director Neal Goren, Gotham Chamber Opera debuted in 2001 with the American premiere of W.A. Mozart's *Il sogno di Scipione*. In subsequent seasons, the company has produced many more local and world premieres, including Bohuslav Martinu's *Les Larmes du Couteau* and *Hlas Lesa* (U.S. premiere 2002); Heinrich Sutermeister's *Die schwarze Spinne* (U.S. premiere 2004); G.F. Handel's *Arianna in Creta* (U.S. stage premiere 2005); Ottorino Respighi's *La bella dormente nel bosco* (U.S. premiere 2005); *Ariadne Unhinged*, with music by Claudio Monteverdi, Joseph Haydn, and Arnold Schoenberg (world premiere 2008); Hadyn's *L'isola disabitata* (New York stage premiere 2009); Xavier Montsalvatge's *El gato con botas* (U.S. stage premiere 2010); Nico Muhly's *Dark Sisters* (World premiere 2011); Lembit Beecher's *I Have No Stories To Tell You* (world premiere 2014); and Toshio Hosokawa's *The Raven* (U.S. premiere 2014).

Gotham Chamber Opera has partnered with notable New York and national institutions, including Lincoln Center Festival and Spoleto USA (Respighi's *La bella dormente nel bosco*) in 2005; the Morgan Library and Museum for *Scenes of Gypsy Life* (an evening of song cycles by Janáček and Dvořák) in 2008; the American Museum of Natural History and the American Repertory Theater for Hadyn's *Il mondo della luna* (2010); Brooklyn Botanic Garden and the Broad Stage, Los Angeles for Daniel Catán's *La hija de Rappaccini* (2013); Trinity Church Wall Street for Marc-Antoine Charpentier's *La descente d'Orphée aux enfers* (2013); The Metropolitan Museum of Art for Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* and Lembit Beecher's *I Have No Stories To Tell You* (2014); and the New York Philharmonic for Hosokawa's *The Raven* (2014).

The company has earned a reputation for showcasing outstanding young singers alongside established directors and choreographers such as Mark Morris (the 2009 production of Hadyn's *L'isola disabitata*), David Parsons (the New York stage premiere of Astor Piazzola's tango opera, *María di Buenos Aires*), Karole Armitage (the world premiere of *Ariadne Unhinged*), Basil Twist (Respighi's *La bella dormente nel bosco*), Robin Guarino (Rossini's *Il signor Bruschino*, Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* and Lembit Beecher's *I Have No Stories to Tell You*), Christopher Alden (Mozart's *Il sogno di Scipione* and Handel's *Arianna in Creta*), Diane Paulus (Haydn's *Il mondo della luna*), Moisés Kaufmann (Montsalvatge's *El gato con botas*), and Rebecca Taichman (Nico Muhly's *Dark Sisters* and Daniel Catán's *La hija de Rappaccini*).

In recent years, Gotham Chamber Opera has been recognized as a pioneer in creating opera productions in alternative venues, beginning in 2010 with its production of Haydn's *Il mondo della luna* at the Hayden Planetarium, followed in 2013 with the U.S. professional stage premiere of Francesco Cavalli's *Eliogabalo* at New York's notorious late night club The Box, Daniel Catán's *La hija de Rappaccini* on the Cherry Esplanade of Brooklyn Botanic Garden and at the Greystone Manor in Beverly Hills, and the double-bill of Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* in the

Bloomberg Arms and Armor Gallery and Lembit Beecher's *I Have No Stories to Tell You* in the Medieval Court of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Purchasing Tickets

Single tickets for all operas are on sale. Single ticket prices start at \$35 and can be purchased by calling (619) 533-7000 or online at www.sdopera.com.

San Diego Opera 2014-2015 International Season

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| <i>Stephen Costello and Ailyn Pérez in recital</i> | | September 5, 2014 |
| <i>Stephanie Blythe and Craig Terry: The songs of Kate Smith</i> | | December 11, 2014 |
| <i>La bohème</i> | Giacomo Puccini | January 24, 27, 29 and Feb. 1 (mat), 2015 |
| <i>Don Giovanni</i> | Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart | February 14, 17, 20 and 22 (mat), 2015 |
| <i>Nixon in China</i> | John Adams | March 14, 17, 20 and 22 (mat), 2015 |
| <i>50th Anniversary Celebration Concert</i> | | April 18 and 19, 2015 |
| <i>El Pasado Nunca se Termina</i> | José "Pepe" Martinez | April 25 at 2 pm and 7 pm, 2015 |

www.sdopera.com