

# SD OPERA Media Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**June 19, 2017**

Contact: Edward Wilensky (619) 232-7636

[Edward.Wilensky@sdopera.com](mailto:Edward.Wilensky@sdopera.com)

## **San Diego Opera Annual Meeting Report**

*Company elects new board president and executive roster*

*Company to place Scenic Studio on sale*

*Receives new innovation grant from  
OPERA America*

*Reports on FY2016 and FY2017 Financials  
and FY2018 ticket sale update*

**San Diego, CA** – San Diego Opera hosted its Annual Meeting of the Membership on Monday, June 19, 2017 at the San Diego Foundation in Liberty Station, led by the Company’s general director, David Bennett, and the executive leadership of the board.

The Company announced that **Dr. Robert H. Kaplan, Ph.D.**, who previously served on the board as the Vice President and Finance Chair, has been elected Board President. He replaces **Carol Lazier**, whose three-year term as President has ended. Carol has been named Chair of the Board and will continue to be involved with the Company.

“In 2014, just weeks after marrying fellow San Diego Opera board member, James Merritt on the stage of our production of Verdi’s *A Masked Ball*, San Diego Opera unexpectedly almost closed. Much to my surprise, I became Board President and spearheaded the rebuilding of San Diego Opera. What an exhilarating, exhausting and exciting three years I have shared with you! Thank you for the opportunity,” said outgoing president Carol Lazier. “Supported by the community and with the guidance of a deeply committed staff and board, our sister organizations around the globe, and OPERA America, San Diego Opera began a multi-year transformation. The Company continues to present world-class mainstage opera and our innovative new **détour** series, which

presents chamber operas in smaller venues, is attracting new audience members and donors. Our education program continues to expand, bringing arts education into classrooms, and our community engagement program continues to evolve. This year our Opera presented free family-friendly performances of *Cinderella* at trolley stops around the county. San Diego Opera is a fiscally responsible, transparent and well-governed arts organization. With our visionary general director David Bennett at the helm, we have become the opera company of today and tomorrow. I know that my colleague Robert Kaplan will continue to move San Diego Opera forward. Working with Robert over the past few years has been a delight, and I am pleased to pass the gavel to him.”

Joining Dr. Kaplan as officers, are **Carol Lazier** as Chair of the Board, **Stacy Kellner Rosenberg** as Executive Vice President, **James Merritt** as Vice President of Finance, and **Linda Spuck** as Secretary/Parliamentarian. A full roster of San Diego Opera’s current Board appears at the end of this release.

“It is an honor to follow Carol Lazier as President of San Diego Opera,” said Dr. Kaplan. “Carol helped save the opera with her money, hard work, and tireless dedication. Through her efforts, David Bennett was hired as General Director, three main stage opera continued, and the very successful **détour** series was added. This new series of smaller operas brought in over 600 new households in its first season alone. I am pleased that Carol will continue on the Board in the role of Chair so her knowledge and enthusiastic support will continue to be available to me and the Company. I look forward to working with the the Board, David, and the staff to continue to offer all of San Diego the magic of opera in a financially responsible manner.”

The Company also announced plans to place the Company’s Scenic Studio in the Barrio Logan neighborhood up for sale. “As San Diego Opera resizes itself to be sustainable, and trends nationwide are moving to smaller productions, our 38,000 square foot scenic studio is being underutilized” said Mr. Bennett. “The Company has not built scenery for a major opera since 2013’s *Murder in the Cathedral*, and the facility requires constant repairs and maintenance which has cost the Company on average \$132,000 annually. The Opera plans to lease back a portion of the current studio while identifying a smaller modern facility to allow future work on sets for the Company, ongoing trade show work, conventions such as Comic-Con International, and work with community partners such as The Glenner Memory Care Centers.” The Scenic Studio employs two full-time staff members who will be absorbed into the Company’s main office in Downtown San Diego during this transition.

The Company also announced that it was a recipient of a two-year \$150,000 Innovation Grant from OPERA America. This grant will be used in 2018 for an opera “hack” where local artists, costume designers, writers and composers will team with technology experts, over a 48-hour period, to dream up new operatic projects. The finished works will then be presented in a 2019 street festival in the Barrio Logan neighborhood.

The finance committee chair reported on the Company’s finances from FY2016. The Company reported an operations deficit of \$271,000, much of which was attributed to the West Coast premiere of *Great Scott*, which resulted in soft ticket sales and was a large and therefore expensive production to produce. The Company also saw a decrease in the number of donors in FY2016, which had been inflated the previous year from the Save San Diego Opera Campaign. The Company also announced it projects a deficit for FY2017, which ends later this month on June 30. The Committee also reported that ticket sales for the 2017-2018 season (which opens October 14 with *The Pirates of Penzance*) has sold 1,000 more tickets to-date than last season, and the **détour** series is already at 81% of its budgeted revenue with a number of events already

exceeding budgeted revenue. The Company believes the strong sales for the upcoming season stems from a season of popular operas such as *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Turandot* as well as the second season of the Company's **détour** series that was incredibly well received in its inaugural year. Only subscriptions are on sale at this point in time, with single tickets going on sale in the fall.

Members of the association also enjoyed a performance from students from Memorial Preparatory for Scholars and Athletes who sang the Children's Chorus from *Turandot* and *La llorona*, a traditional song from Oaxaca, Mexico. The students at Memorial benefited from San Diego Opera's extensive in-school education program where they have continued to take on new challenges, learning how to sing in four different languages, conquering nerves and stage fright, tackling challenging musical concepts, and most importantly learning how to work together as a team. Their performance at this meeting was a tribute to their collective focus and a fitting end to the Company's Annual Meeting.

[www.sdopera.org](http://www.sdopera.org)

# SD OPERA

2017-2018 Board of Directors

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**Carol Lazier**  
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**Robert H. Kaplan, Ph.D.**  
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**Stacy Kellner Rosenberg**  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

**James A. Merritt**  
VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE

**Linda Spuck**  
SECRETARY/PARLIAMENTARIAN

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*\*Life Director*

