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Florida Grand Opera Appoints Susan T. Danis as New General Director



MIAMI – August 29, 2012 – Florida Grand Opera (FGO) is proud to announce the appointment of the company’s new General Director and CEO, Susan T. Danis. An established arts advocate and leader with a proven track record of fiscal growth, Danis is scheduled to take the position as the company’s fourth General Director effective **October 9, 2012**.

“Susan is a phenomenal choice to lead FGO. She has the unique combination of being a successful opera producer, manager and development expert. We are ecstatic to have Susan build on FGO’s history as Florida’s oldest performing arts company and infuse the company with great productions, ideas and enthusiasm,” remarked Victor H. Mendelson, President of FGO’s Board of Directors.

“We set out on a lengthy search to find the ideal candidate, someone who has both passion for opera and established business success in arts management. We also sought a reliable leader and ambassador for the company with a true sense of community. Susan meets and exceeds all these requirements and is the perfect choice to lead Florida Grand Opera into a new chapter in its history,” said William Hill, Vice President of FGO and Head of the CEO Search Committee.

THE SEARCH

Anticipating the planned retirement of Robert M. Heuer, the company's CEO of 27 years, FGO's Board of Directors embarked on an international search for his replacement, forming a Search Committee appointed by Mr. Mendelson to be under Mr. Hill's leadership.

The Committee was comprised of various arts and business experts, including board chairperson Jane Robinson, board members Peggy Czyzak-Dannenbaum, Victoria Garrigo, Per Loof, and former FGO director Jeffrey Bartel, as well as Dennis Scholl, Executive Vice President of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Following a retreat led by OPERA America President Marc Scorca, the Committee engaged Genovese Vanderhoof & Associates, a leading North American arts search firm, under the leadership of partner Margaret Genovese.

The goal of the search was to identify and recruit top talent to develop the managerial, artistic, and fiscal resources to sustain an opera company of international quality in South Florida, building on FGO's 72-year history. FGO received a large number of resumes from qualified candidates. Each of the 59 applications submitted was scrutinized to ensure candidates met the following key criteria: fluency in the art form; fundraising experience with proven success; financial competency; as well as organizational and leadership skills.

Applicants were narrowed down to four semifinalists and, finally, two finalists, who underwent intensive rounds of meetings with board members and key staff. FGO's CEO search was funded by a grant from the Knight Foundation.

SUSAN T. DANIS

Danis comes to FGO with more than 20 years of arts administration and particular expertise in the areas of marketing and fundraising. Since 1999, she has served as the Executive Director of Sarasota Opera, and has been instrumental in the company's continued fiscal development.

During her tenure in Sarasota, the company's operating budget more than doubled, growing from \$3.2 million to over \$8 million. Beating fundraising goals at every turn, Danis increased individual giving by more than 200% in a seven-year period and raised more than \$47 million for a capital campaign, part of which funded the \$20 million renovation of the company's historic theater. A savvy businesswoman with real estate expertise, she personally oversaw every detail of the project through its completion in 2008, as well as the overhaul of the company's 16-unit apartment complex. Her efforts earned her the Florida Trust for Historic Preservations Award for Outstanding Achievement in Restoration in 2010.

Following the restructuring of the Board of Directors to best suit the company's needs, Danis worked to help establish a unique artistic vision for Sarasota Opera. This included the start of an American Classics Series, presenting great American 20th-century works together with an innovative educational program to engage the community. She was also instrumental in the ongoing commissioning of new works for the Sarasota Youth Opera Program and ensuring the completion of the company's Verdi Cycle, making it the only company in the world to have staged every note written by the great composer.

A proven leader in the opera community, Danis recently completed a six-year term as a member of the Board of Trustees of OPERA America, three of which she served as treasurer. She served as an emeritus

board member of the Sarasota Music Archive, a member of the Community Advisory Board of the Junior League, a past board member of the Sarasota County Arts Council and the New Gate School of Sarasota. She also acted as a panelist for the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment of the Arts.

Jane A. Robinson, FGO's Chairman of the Board, states "I anticipate that Susan will position our company to great success in the tradition of renowned Lyric Opera of Chicago's late General Director, Ardis Krainik, who is said to have had an iron hand in a velvet glove. We anticipate great visionary strength from Susan's past experience and we look forward to the future under her expert leadership".

Danis holds a Master of Business Administration, with a concentration in International Marketing, from the University of Hartford's Paris Program, where she learned French, and a Bachelor of Science from Indiana University. In addition, she looks forward to continuing to work on her Spanish in Miami.

ABOUT FLORIDA GRAND OPERA

Florida Grand Opera traces its roots to 1941 when it began as Greater Miami Opera, later merging in 1994 with The Opera Guild Inc., of Fort Lauderdale, founded in 1945. Celebrating its 72nd year of continuous performances during the 2012-2013 season, Florida Grand Opera stands as the oldest performing arts organizations in Florida. In addition to producing standard repertoire, Florida Grand Opera also presents lesser known operas, as well as commissions and produces new operas – all productions featuring projected translations in English and Spanish. Annually, main stage performances are attended by approximately 60,000 people, and education and outreach programs serve over 20,000 members of the community. FGO offers several highly successful outreach and educational programs, including its internationally-recognized Young Artist Studio.

Florida Grand Opera, recognized for funding by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Funding is also provided, in part, by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners as recommended by the Broward Cultural Council and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, Cultural Affairs Council, the Mayor and the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners and the Miami-Dade County Tourist Development Council. Program support is provided by the City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, Cultural Arts Council. Florida Grand Opera is a Resident Company of the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County and a member company of OPERA America.

American Airlines is the Official Airline, Intercontinental Miami is the Official Hotel and Steinway & Sons is the Official Piano of Florida Grand Opera. For more information on Florida Grand Opera, visit us at www.FGO.org.

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