



THE DALLAS OPERA  
**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**THE DALLAS OPERA IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE  
THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW  
GENERAL DIRECTOR:  
GEORGE STEEL**

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**SCHEDULED TO ASSUME THE OFFICE OCTOBER 1, 2008**

DALLAS, AUGUST 12, 2008 – The Dallas Opera is extremely proud to announce that **George Steel** will become the General Director of **The Dallas Opera**, effective October 1, 2008. The appointment of this multi-talented impresario/conductor/composer to lead the Company into the **Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House** at the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts was announced by the head of the search committee, **Dallas Opera Board Chairman Jay Marshall**, after researching and interviewing candidates from across the nation and around the world.

George Steel, a 41-year-old Maryland native and graduate of Yale University, currently serves as executive director of Columbia University's **Miller Theatre**.

The founder and conductor of the **Gotham City Orchestra** and **Vox Vocal Ensemble** will take the helm of The Dallas Opera as the sixth general director in the company's illustrious 52-year history.

“With our long-awaited move into the **Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House at the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts** in 2009,” explains Mr. Marshall, “all eyes will be on Dallas.”

“The search committee has been convinced – from the beginning – that this moment in our history demands a general director of extraordinary expertise, proven leadership capabilities and wide-ranging accomplishments; someone equally at home with the fiscal and artistic demands of creating great opera in the new millenium.”

“George Steel,” adds Mr. Marshall, “has the experience and perspective necessary to lead a world-class company into a world-class opera house; produce outstanding entertainment; connect with a dynamic, diverse and rapidly expanding community; encourage new patrons; and ensure the development of both current and future donors.”

“With his business acumen and musical ‘chops,’ I am convinced he is the right person for the new opera house and the next era of The Dallas Opera.”

The search for a new general director began last autumn, following the resignation of Karen Stone, who led the company for four years (2003-2007).

“George Steel has something for everyone,” explains **Board President Dr. Kern Wildenthal**. “He’s familiar with the ins-and-outs of running a company and sticking to a budget, yet, he has the heart and imagination of an artist. He’s a man for all seasons.”

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Mr. Steel, praised by *The New York Sun* for his “uncanny talent for programming and shaping performances that excite and inspire people of all ages and levels of musical familiarity,” succeeded in turning a small academic auditorium at Columbia University into an internationally acclaimed showcase for early and modern music, hosting 60 to 80 events each year.

Since taking the helm of the Miller Theater in 1997, Steel has launched full-scale opera production, commissioned ballets, created the *Theatre of Ideas* series, increased fundraising from \$120,000 to \$1.35 million annually, and developed into one of New York City’s most influential impresarios (*New York Magazine*).

“No one has his finger on the pulse of New York’s new music scene more surely than George Steel, the intrepid executive director of ...Miller Theatre, and the consistency of his taste is a reassurance in uncertain times.” (*The New Yorker*)

The Search Committee viewed Mr. Steel’s conducting achievements as a significant plus in choosing him to be the new General Director because of the musical understanding he brings to opera. Dallas audiences should also get a chance to enjoy this side of his talents; Mr.Steel and the Dallas Opera will be working together to find opportunities for him to conduct locally.

Mr. Steel has also served as musical consultant to the Leonard Bernstein Office since 2006. Steel studied at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago and, at the

invitation of the conductor, attended Leonard Bernstein's conducting seminar at the Tanglewood Institute for four consecutive seasons in the 1980s. Mr. Steel also worked closely with Mr. Bernstein on Washington D.C. performances of the composer's *Mass* (in 1981) and *A Quiet Place* (1984). In addition, Steel worked with the Maestro on his *Missa Brevis*.

His prior experience includes his work as managing producer of the Tisch Center for the Arts, 92<sup>nd</sup> Street YW-YMHA, one of New York City's most distinguished performing arts venues. It was here that Mr. Steel created several renowned series: *Today's Composers*, *Project America*, *Meet the Virtuoso* and Dawn Upshaw's *Voices of the Spirit*; and produced off-site concerts that attracted new, record audiences.

"This is going to be a tremendous move for me – in every sense," says Mr. Steel. "I have family connections in Dallas as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so, coming to Dallas is something of a spiritual return. Yet in many ways, Dallas will be a 'Brave New World.' The challenge to build a 21<sup>st</sup> century opera company equal to its remarkable new venue proved impossible to resist – I can't wait to begin."

George Steel has acted as a programming consultant to the "Lincoln Center Festival 2000," where he programmed the *Electronic Evolutions* series; the *Sacred Music* series of the Holland Festival (2000-2001); and the "World Trade Center Summer Music Festival 2001" which included the program "Leonard Bernstein's New York."

Mr. Steel has served as a member of FACE, the French-American Cultural Exchange (2003-2006) and the Young Leaders Forum of the National Committee on US-China Relations (2005-2007). He chaired the NYSCA Music Panel and performed committee service for the Pew Charitable Trust and the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, among others.

George Steel is the recipient of the 2003 Trailblazer Award from the American Music Center, the 2003 ASCAP Concert Music Award, and both the 2002 and the 2005 Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming.

The appointment of The Dallas Opera's new general director was announced earlier this afternoon to the Board of Directors.

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A tradition of artistic excellence and community engagement has made The Dallas Opera a key contributor to the international cultural reputation of Dallas. For more than half a century, the company (as one of the area's largest arts employers) has also had a significant economic impact on the performing arts in North Texas.

The Dallas Opera has had the honor of presenting many international stars in their American debuts, including Dame Joan Sutherland, Montserrat Caballé, Jon Vickers, and Plácido Domingo, as well as designer/director Franco Zeffirelli. A champion of new work, The Dallas Opera has presented the American premieres of five operas, as well as two world premieres.

A third world premiere is scheduled for the 2009-2010 Season: Hermann Melville's *Moby-Dick* adapted by composer **Jake Heggie** and librettist **Gene Scheer**.

The Dallas Opera's music education programs have garnered numerous awards. Thousands of fourth through eighth-graders attend special performances of fully staged operas each season, and hundreds of teachers receive training in the use of the Opera's successful integrated curriculum materials.

Recently, The Dallas Opera collaborated with **Southern Methodist University** to develop the **Emerging Artists Program** and a new one act opera, *Red Carnations*, designed to introduce students to the art form while sparking discussion of "stranger danger" and internet predators. The company also launched its first **Young Artists Program** to advance the education and performance opportunities for tomorrow's talented young opera singers. They perform a work entitled "Opera in a Box: Follow Your Dreams."

All this, and five world-class opera productions each season!

The Dallas Opera is preparing, in earnest, for its move to the state-of-the-art opera house designed by the Pritzker Prize-winning architect, **Lord Norman Foster** and partners. The Opera's new venue at the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts will be made possible by a history-making \$42-million gift from Margot and Bill Winspear, for whom the opera house is named.

Construction on the Center is well underway and The Dallas Opera will move to its permanent home next year. The company's inaugural performance, Verdi's *Otello*, starring tenor **Clifton Forbis**, will take place the evening of **Friday, October 23, 2009**.

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## **George Steel** Biography

One of the most exciting forces on the classical music scene, **George Steel** has been acclaimed as a conductor of music spanning more than 600 years, ranging from Tallis and Byrd, to Lotti and Bach, to Brahms and Chausson, to Stravinsky and Ives, to John Zorn and Morton Feldman. His performances of new and old music at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Caramoor, Park Avenue Armory, and Miller Theatre have been hailed as “superb” and “excellent” by *The New York Times*; his performances have been televised, recorded, webcast, and broadcast live on radio.

He is the founder of groups dedicated to works of the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (Gotham City Orchestra). Called a “programming superhero” by the *Village Voice*, Steel has made it his mission to reinvent the concert-going experience, attracting large and notably young audiences to his performances.

For his work, Steel has recently received the 2004–05 ASCAP-Chamber Music America (CMA) Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music. In addition, *New York* magazine named George Steel one of the most influential people in New York in its 2006 “Influentials” issue, and recognized his programming in its 2005 “Cultural Elite” issue, listing Miller Theatre as having the “Best Music Programming before 1800 or after 1990” and the “Best Night at the Ballet.” Previously Steel was awarded the 2003 Trailblazer Award from the American Music Center, and the 2003 ASCAP Concert Music Award, the 2001–02 ASCAP-CMA Award for Adventurous Programming.

Since 1997, Steel has also been New York’s “impresario of the improbable,” (in the words of *Time Out New York*), running the Miller Theatre at Columbia University. Acclaimed for its innovative approach to programming, the Theatre seeks to illuminate and celebrate the creative process and the essential relationship between the arts and society. Its programming stretches across cultural and disciplinary boundaries, and embraces the art of our time as well as that of the past through presentations on stage by established and emerging artists.

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*For high-resolution, digital photographs suitable for print*

*To arrange an interview*

*Or for additional information*

*Please contact Assoc. Dir. Of Marketing Suzanne Calvin*

*214.443.1014 or [suzannec@dallasopera.org](mailto:suzannec@dallasopera.org)*

### **Ticket Information for the 2008-2009 Dallas Opera Season**

**Season subscriptions are now on sale starting at just \$75!**

**Single tickets \$15 to \$199, if purchased in advance.**

**Single tickets go on sale to the general public in September.**

**For more information or to renew your subscription, contact  
The Dallas Opera Ticket Services Office at 214.443.1000  
or visit TDO's web site at dallasopera.org.**

**THE DALLAS OPERA 2008-2009 SEASON INFORMATION**

The Dallas Opera celebrates its Fifty-Second International Season with 20 performances of five productions in the Music Hall at Fair Park. Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m. and matinees begin at 2 p.m. English translations are projected above the stage at every performance and assistance is available for the hearing impaired.

**THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO by W.A. Mozart**

**November 14, 16(m), 19 & 22, 2008**

**Production from New York City Opera**

An opera in four acts first performed at Vienna's Berg-theater, May 1, 1786.

Text by Lorenzo Da Ponte after the stage play by Pierre-Augustin Beaumarchais.

**Time:** A single day

**Place:** The estate of Count Almaviva

**Conductor:** Graeme Jenkins

**Stage Director:** John Copley

**Production Design:** Carl Toms

**Lighting Design:** Jeff Harris

**Wig & make-up Design:** David Zimmerman

**Chorus Master:** Alexander Rom

**Starring:** Daniel Okulitch (*Figaro*), Lyubov Petrova (*Susanna*), Michael Todd Simpson (*Count Almaviva*), Susanna Phillips\* (*Countess Almaviva*), Jennifer Holloway\* (*Cherubino*), Stephen Morscheck (*Doctor Bartolo*), Suzanna Guzman (*Marcellina*).

**DIE FLEDERMAUS by Johann Strauss II**

**December 5, 7(m), 10 & 13, 2008**

**Production from Seattle Opera**

Comic opera in three acts first performed at Vienna's Theater an der Wein, April 5, 1874.

Text by Carl Haffner and Richard Genée after the play by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy.

**Time:** Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century

**Place:** A spa town near Vienna

**Conductor:** Graeme Jenkins

**Stage Director:** Tomar Zvulun\*

**Production Design:** Zack Brown\*

**Lighting Design:** Marie Barrett

**Wig & make-up Design:** David Zimmerman

**Chorus Master:** Alexander Rom

**Starring:** Wolfgang Holzmaier (*Gabriel von Eisenstein*), Ana Maria Martinez (*Rosalinda*), Christopher Feigum (*Dr. Falke*), Ava Pine (*Adele*), Bruce Ford (*Alfred*) and Marianna Kulikova (*Prince Orlofsky*).

**ROBERTO DEVEREUX by Gaetano Donizetti**

**January 23, 25(m), 28 & 31, 2009**

**A new Dallas Opera production by the team that brought you MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS!**

An opera in three acts first performed at Teatro San Carlo in Naples, October 28, 1837.

Text by Salvatore Cammarano after François Ancelot's tragedy, *Elisabeth d'Angleterre*.

**Time:** the Elizabethan Age

**Place:** London

**Conductor:** Graeme Jenkins

**Stage Director:** Stephen Lawless

**Scenic Design:** Benoit Dugardyn

**Costume Design:** Ingeborg Bernerth

**Lighting Design:** TBD

**Wig & make-up Design:** David Zimmerman

**Chorus Master:** Alexander Rom

**Starring:** Stephen Costello (*Roberto Devereux*), Hasmik Papian\* (*Elizabeth the Queen*), David Kempster (*Duke of Nottingham*), Elizabeth Batton (*Sara, Duchess of Nottingham*)

**LA BOHÈME by Giacomo Puccini**

**February 13, 15(m), 18 & 21, 2009**

**Our most popular opera in one of our most popular productions!**

An opera in four acts first performed in Turin's Teatro Regio, February 1, 1896.

**Time:** 1830s

**Place:** Paris, France

**Conductor:** Pietro Rizzo\*\*

**Stage Director:** Mark Streshinsky

**Scenic Design:** Jean Pierre Ponnelle

**Costume Design:** Peter J. Hall

**Lighting Designer:** Marie Barrett

**Wig & make-up Design:** David Zimmerman

**Chorus Master:** Alexander Rom

**Starring:** Maria Kanyova (*Mimi*), James Valenti\* (*Rodolfo*), Valentina Farcas\* (*Musetta*), Dwayne Croft (*Marcello*), Robert Gleadow\* (*Colline*) and Weston Hurt\* (*Schaunard*).

**THE ITALIAN GIRL IN ALGIERS by Gioachino Rossini**

**March 6, 8(m), 11 & 14, 2009**

**The Grand Finale! Production from Santa Fe Opera.**

A comic opera in two acts first performed in Venice's Teatro San Benedetto, May 22, 1813.

Text substantially derived from Angelo Anelli's libretto for Luigi Mosca's 1808 *L'italiana in Algeri*.

**Time:** Fantasy

**Place:** Algiers

**Conductor:** Graeme Jenkins

**Stage Director:** Chris Alexander

**Scenic Design:** Robert Innes Hopkins\*

**Costume Design:** David C. Woolard\*

**Lighting Design:** Duane Schuler

**Wig & make-up Design:** David Zimmerman

**Chorus Master:** Alexander Rom

**Starring:** Manuela Custer\* (*Isabella*), William Burden (*Lindoro*), Paolo Pecchioli\* (*Mustafa*) and Patrick Carfizzi\* (*Taddeo*).

\* Dallas Opera Debut

\*\* American Debut

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