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For Immediate Release: April 28, 2011

Madison Opera Names Kathryn Smith As Its New General Director



Madison, Wis. – Kathryn Smith, the current general director of Tacoma Opera and former assistant artistic administrator at the Metropolitan Opera, will begin as general director of Madison Opera on July 1, 2011. Madison Opera’s Board of Trustees voted to appoint Smith at a meeting this evening, ending a national search to replace former general director Allan Naplan.

“We are thrilled to announce Kathryn Smith as the new general director of Madison Opera,” said Madison Opera Board President Fran Klos. “Kathryn brings an impressive wealth of experience to the table, but it is her passion, creativity, and deep knowledge of producing opera that we know makes her the perfect fit for our company and for the community.”

Smith has distinguished herself as a strong leader throughout her career and is credited with rebuilding Tacoma Opera after the company had been reduced to a one production season. Her strategic plan for the company increased artistic output to three productions per season and saw the eradication of years of accumulated debt. Over the course of her seven years with Tacoma Opera, Smith significantly raised the company’s regional profile, expanding the repertoire to include both rarities and mainstream fare and attracting higher-profile talent and increased grant funding.

A Seattle native and graduate of Harvard University, Smith began her opera career in high school and has worked at Wolf Trap Opera, Chautauqua Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. In 1997, she joined the Metropolitan Opera’s rehearsal department, and in 1999 she was named assistant company manager, with her duties including the organization of a four-week company tour to Japan. In 2001, Smith was promoted to assistant artistic administrator at the Met. In that position, she was responsible for a \$4.5 million budget and a range of artistic planning duties.

“It has been a pleasure to get to know Kathryn Smith throughout the search process, and I enthusiastically welcome her to the Madison Opera family,” said Artistic Director John DeMain. “She has that unique combination of excellent artistic instincts, business savvy, and commitment to education that will be invaluable for Madison Opera and the entire community.”

On her appointment, Smith said, “I am delighted and honored to become Madison Opera’s general director. It is clear that many people in the community care deeply about opera and about the company, and I look forward to working with them to build on Madison Opera’s momentum and create something exciting that will be here for the next fifty years.”

Madison Opera continues its 50th anniversary season this weekend with performances of Verdi’s *La Traviata* on Friday, April 29 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, May 1 at 2:30 p.m. The recently announced 2011-2012 season will include productions of Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin*, Philip Glass’ *Galileo Galilei*, and Rossini’s *Cinderella*.

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