

Pittsburgh Opera NEWS RELEASE

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Pittsburgh Opera Strengthens Its Senior Staff as 70th Season Begins

Pittsburgh, PA (September 23, 2008) . . . Pittsburgh Opera, one of America's leading opera companies, has strengthened its senior management team as it begins its 70th season. "Pittsburgh Opera is entering a new era," noted General Director Christopher Hahn. "We have been fortunate to attract some of the best and brightest executives in arts management. I am delighted that they have chosen to move to Pittsburgh to help direct our ever-growing opera company. Additionally, we have made some management changes to allow us to offer even better programming."

The new leaders at Pittsburgh Opera include:

- **William Powers**, formerly Director of Artistic Administration, has been promoted to Director of Administration and Artistic Operations;
- **Christina Waddle** has signed on as Director of Development;
- **Debra Bell** joined the company as Director of Marketing and Communications;
- **Shawn Fertitta** is the Opera Center Administrator and Facility Manager; and
- **Linda Giebel** has been named Education Programs Associate.

"Mr. Powers, Ms. Waddle and Ms. Bell are members of the Opera's senior staff and report directly to me," Mr. Hahn said. Ms. Fertitta reports to Mr. Powers, and Ms. Giebel to Dr. Marilyn Egan, Director of Education. Mr. Hahn pointed out that all of these appointments fill vacancies. "Adding this new leadership to the first-rate staff already in place gives us a full complement to face the challenges of a new season."

"Pittsburgh Opera is multi-faceted, offering a very wide range of programs, from our mainstage productions to cabarets. What's more, our resident artist program—one of the nation's top five opera training centers—brings to Pittsburgh the hottest young stars for instruction and coaching. And our education offerings, which expand each year, provide countless opportunities for people of all ages to learn more about opera," Mr. Hahn explained. "We have just relocated to Pittsburgh's vibrant Strip District where we have transformed George Westinghouse's original air brake factory into creative space for rehearsals and intimate performances, our costume shop, and administrative offices. By having rehearsal space where our singers can rehearse on the set

for weeks rather than days, our singers will be able to deliver even more polished and confident performances.

“It is important to note that our mainstage operas will continue in the Cultural District at the Benedum. Our 70th season does, indeed, signal a grand new era for one of Pittsburgh’s oldest performing arts organizations.”

William J. Powers

As the new Director of Administration and Artistic Operations, **William J. Powers** now handles artistic aspects of the company and oversees most managerial functions. He joined Pittsburgh Opera as Director of Artistic Administration in 2007. Mr. Powers received a BA in Music from Hamilton College and an M.BA in Finance and Management from Fordham University.

He has worked in executive positions with some of the country’s top performing arts organizations. He served as Administrative Director of the Juilliard School’s Department of Vocal Arts and the Juilliard Opera Center. While at the Metropolitan Opera, Mr. Powers was Associate Director of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.

In 2003 Mr. Powers won appointment as General Director of the Berkshire Opera Company, a summer festival in western Massachusetts. There he was responsible for all aspects of the organization, ranging from strategic and financial planning to marketing, fundraising, production, and artistic administration. He has also held posts with the Aspen Music Festival, the Music Academy of the West, and has served on the Board of Directors of OPERA America.

Christina Waddle

Christina Waddle has 20 years of experience in the non-profit sector in fundraising, planning, and board development. Most recently, she worked as a Director for the Southeast Region of the American Diabetes Association. Previously, she was the Executive Director of Summerfair Foundation, Inc., an organization that has supported the arts in Greater Cincinnati for more than 40 years.

Additional experience has included a range of fundraising accomplishments with organizations including the Greater Cincinnati Television Educational Foundation, Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park and Museum, the American Cancer Society, and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Ms. Waddle holds a BA in Communication Arts and a BA in Music, both from the College of Mount St. Joseph. Additionally, she earned an MM in Music History from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and has worked as an accompanist and music educator.

Debra Bell

Debra Bell has been hired as Director of Marketing and Communications. Most recently, she worked as Marketing Director for the prestigious Glimmerglass Opera, near Cooperstown, New York.

Before that, Ms. Bell worked for five years in Audience Development and Resource Development at the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. She has a broad range of work experience in the arts that also includes entrepreneurial projects. She was co-founder and Managing Director of Words and Music of Beaufort, Inc. and was instrumental in starting the satellite gallery project for the Mississippi Museum of Art. She has served many churches as their Music Director.

Ms. Bell holds a BA in Church Music from Belhaven College, an MA in Arts Administration from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and an MBA from the University of Cincinnati.

Shawn Fertitta

Shawn Fertitta came to Pittsburgh Opera via Broadway to take on responsibilities as Opera Center Administrator and Facility Manager.

For the past ten years, Ms. Fertitta has been the Theatre Manager for Circle in the Square Theatre and a company manager for many Broadway productions, including *Smokey Joe's Café*, *SWING!*, *Chicago*, *Proof*, *Take Me Out*, *Faith Healer*, and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*.

Before moving to Manhattan, Ms. Fertitta worked in Nashville at the Grand Ole Opry and on the *General Jackson* showboat. She also was employed at Opera Roanoke and the Virginia Symphony.

Ms. Fertitta holds a BA from Virginia Tech in Arts Management.

Linda Giebel

Linda Giebel has signed on as Education Programs Associate, a part-time position. Ms. Giebel has worked in the visual arts since 1983. She has extensive experience in design, production, advertising, arts education and fine art.

Ms. Giebel holds a BA in Art from Carlow University. As a strong supporter of arts integration in the public school system, Ms. Giebel has facilitated the inclusion of visual art skills as a core academic requirement in her work with students at Community College of Allegheny County, Hampton Township School District, and River Educational Services.

Pittsburgh Opera, now celebrating its 70th season, is one of America's leading opera companies. It offers a range of programs, from mainstage productions to free community concerts to intimate cabarets. Pittsburgh Opera's internationally renowned resident artist program is among the country's top five training centers for rising opera stars. Each year, more than 20,000 students, families, and educators participate in Pittsburgh Opera educational events. The company's newly designed administrative and rehearsal space is housed in a 140-year-old air brake factory in the city's Strip District.

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