

RENÉE FLEMING

INITIATIVE

LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO

FROM: LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO

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EMBARGOED UNTIL:

4PM, CST Thurs., Dec., 9, 2010

**RENÉE FLEMING NAMED BY LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO
FIRST EVER
CREATIVE CONSULTANT**

December 9, 2010 CHICAGO – The Board of Directors of Lyric Opera of Chicago announced today that soprano RENÉE FLEMING has been named Creative Consultant, a first in this company's history. Simultaneously, she and Sir Andrew Davis, Lyric's music director, have been elected to the Board of Directors as Vice-Presidents. Ms. Fleming's appointment as Creative Consultant is effective immediately, for a term of five years.

The Renée Fleming Initiative is being sponsored by an Anonymous Donor, Mr. and Mrs. John V. Crowe, The Crown Family, Mr. and Mrs. J. Thomas Hurvis, Richard P. and Susan Kiphart, John D. and Alexandra C. Nichols, the Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Enterprises Group, and Mr. and Mrs. William C. Vance — all of whom are prominent members of the Lyric Opera of Chicago Board of Directors.

As Creative Consultant of Lyric Opera of Chicago, Ms. Fleming will play an active leadership role in creating new projects and initiatives designed to increase opera audiences and awareness of the art form, while sharing in the company's artistic vision.

Her plans, in collaboration with her Lyric colleagues, include:

- Curating a world-premiere opera to debut in the 2015-16 season.

- Collaborating with other Chicago-based arts institutions to send a special message about the strength of culture in Chicago.
- Fostering an annual commitment to American music theater, starting with a new production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma* in the spring of 2013.
- Further developing Lyric's young-professionals initiative, which takes opera into the workplace and provides entry-level experiences for the curious adult.
- Expanding the education activities of Lyric to include a joint program with the Merit School of Music devoted to finding and nurturing young, talented singers in the Chicago area, and to making Lyric more accessible to the children and young adults involved in all areas of music education at Merit.
- Presenting non-operatic and off-season performances at the Civic Opera House.
- Continuing her on-stage presence at Lyric, including a Subscriber Appreciation Concert with Dmitri Hvorostovsky honoring General Director William Mason on January 7, 2012; staged concert performances of André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire* with Ms. Fleming in the role created for her, Blanche DuBois, in spring 2013; a production of *Capriccio* for fall 2014, in which Ms. Fleming will sing the Countess (both *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Capriccio* will be part of Lyric's subscription season); and participation in Lyric's 60th Anniversary Gala on November 1, 2014.
- Establishing a prominent presence in a variety of web-based marketing projects, as well as in print and broadcast media. Ms. Fleming and Sir Andrew Davis are already in preparation for an audio/video series that will introduce audiences to the new 2011-12 season.

Of this new adventure in her professional life, Renée Fleming said, "Lyric is a vibrant home to so many talented and dedicated colleagues. I am eager to join forces with them as we work to keep opera relevant and meaningful in people's lives today. Dick Kiphart, Bill Mason, Sir Andrew Davis, and the Lyric Board have my deepest gratitude for this extraordinary privilege." (Attached below is a document in which Ms. Fleming explains her thoughts and initiatives, "IN HER OWN WORDS.")

Board President Richard P. Kiphart said, "For any business to flourish, new ideas are essential. Renée's creativity and flair will be fantastic for Lyric Opera and will add to what is already a very successful organization. She is a highly knowledgeable opera professional who has a broad view of what a major opera house can mean to a community. She is also dedicated to bringing new audiences to our art form and to furthering the reach of opera through educational initiatives. I am also delighted that she will be joining Sir Andrew Davis as an international presence for our organization."

Sir Andrew Davis commented, "Renée and I have been friends and colleagues for many years and collaborating with her has always been for me an enormous pleasure. First and foremost, she

is a marvelously natural and instinctive musician; in both musical and dramatic matters she is thoughtful, sensitive and committed. She is a great star and yet always works with her fellow artists in a spirit of mutual respect and an infectious delight in the common pursuit of the highest artistic standards. The passion she brings to her performances is echoed in everything she does, which is why I think she is such an inspirational addition to our team. I look forward to working with her for many years to come.”

General Director William Mason added, “I have been involved with Lyric Opera for virtually my entire professional career, so it is particularly important to me that there be a strong team to carry on when I retire. That is why I am so delighted that Renée will be joining the terrific artistic and management forces we now have in place, and that she will be working with the new general director when she or he is hired. Renée comes with new and interesting ideas and will be an important collaborator as the company moves forward. She is fervently committed to ensuring the future of opera, and needless to say has keen insights into what makes great singers. All of these attributes make her an exciting and invaluable addition to the Lyric Opera family.”

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RENÉE FLEMING: “IN HER OWN WORDS”

When approached by Dick Kiphart and Lyric Opera of Chicago with the opportunity to contribute in an administrative capacity, I was speechless; rare for a singer. The thought of working on the other side of the lights hadn’t occurred to me, and I began to ponder exactly how I could best aid one of the world’s greatest opera houses while continuing to meet my performance obligations. I discovered that my passion for this art form and my desire to contribute run equally high, and I am deeply grateful to Dick, the Lyric Board, Bill Mason, and Sir Andrew for this opportunity.

We singers have a unique perspective. Over time, we observe and experience not only how different companies operate, program, and present, but also how different audiences perceive various productions and opera in general. Lyric is special to me and to so many artists for offering a wonderful “home” where we love to perform. It is also renowned for top-drawer management and the highest artistic standards championed by Bill Mason and Sir Andrew Davis. Add to that an open-minded, theater-loving audience, and Lyric has it all.

Further, in the current difficult economic climate, Bill, his senior administrative team, and the extraordinary Lyric Board have been meticulous when it comes to fiscal prudence, and they have managed this without sacrificing artistic quality. This, combined with aggressive marketing and

fundraising, has kept the company in excellent financial shape, which is one of the many reasons why I am excited to be joining forces with Lyric. So, the ship is airtight, the economic storm is subsiding, and it's time to take those brave steps forward and tackle the challenges facing opera today.

Drawing on my experience and on my respect and love for Lyric, I am hoping to develop the following initiatives and programs in concert with my new Lyric colleagues. These plans, while ambitious, are the product of much reflection on how I feel I might best contribute to one of the world's most respected cultural institutions.

World Premiere

New works are the lifeblood of this genre we so love. Lyric Opera is generously allowing me to curate a world-premiere opera to be performed in the 2015-16 season. Sir Andrew, Bill, and I are already looking at potential properties and composers.

Chicago Stands for Culture

Reflecting on my years of travel, one thing is clear to me: Chicago is a cultural mecca. Loving theater and art as I do, and having Lyric and the Chicago Symphony together in one friendly, lakeside, thriving city, presents a unique opportunity for destination-style festivals. In terms of revenue, marketing, and PR sharing, the whole is decidedly more than its parts. My colleagues and I would like to collaborate with other Chicago-based institutions such as the Chicago Symphony, Art Institute, Goodman Theatre, and Harris Theater to exploit this unique cultural landscape far and wide in support of both the arts and the city of Chicago.

The American Musical at the Civic Opera House

I believe it may be time to reexamine the role of an opera house in American communities in the 21st century. In addition to creating new works and providing quality programming in the operatic lexicon we know and love, we can also broaden the offerings to include more from our own musical heritage.

After 100 years in this country, the American musical has achieved "classic" status, and opera companies with extraordinary artistic resources are uniquely positioned to present productions at the highest level as part of the standard repertory. We needn't wait for Broadway touring companies to present works that are tailor-made for the Chicago community, and that highlight the strengths of Lyric. Lyric has been investigating possibilities in this area for some time, and we would like to foster an annual series. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that Lyric will be presenting Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma* in the spring of 2013.

Outreach and Community Engagement

As classical music has become more rarified in the past century, and popular music has taken over mass culture, outreach has become even more important. In a modern world where at least two generations of limited education in the arts has diminished the assumed contextual knowledge that has always been key for building opera appreciation and attendance, we should be casting as wide a net as possible. Lyric is already reaching out to students and adults through a wide variety of programs annually, and I am looking forward to helping my colleagues do even more in this regard.

I am particularly interested in developing programs that help newcomers test the opera waters, ideally with a community of like-minded explorers. We should reward their curiosity with user-friendly, non-patronizing resources that not only provide information about the works and productions, but give historical context as well. Sir Andrew and I are already working on a series of videos that will appear on Lyric's website and will introduce potential audiences to Lyric's new 2011-12 season.

Performances

As I continue performing around the world, we have added several exclusive projects to my performance calendar, specifically for the Lyric audience. These include a staged concert production of André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, in which I sing the dramatically challenging role of Blanche DuBois that was created for me. On January 7, 2012, there will be a Subscriber Appreciation Concert to honor Bill Mason, whose 50-year involvement at Lyric and tenure as General Director culminates at the end of the 2011-12 season. I am grateful to be sharing this concert of favorite duets and arias with my friend, the extraordinary Dmitri Hvorostovsky. Sir Andrew will of course be on the podium. Further, in the 2014-2015 season, Lyric is mounting a production of Richard Strauss's *Capriccio* with Sir Andrew conducting so that I can share one of my favorite roles, the Countess, with the Lyric audience. And, I'll be participating in the company's 60th Anniversary Gala on November 1, 2014, along with many of my esteemed colleagues.

Education Expansion & Finding Future Stars

Lyric has a richly diverse educational program in place serving both schools and communities. Helping to build on current programs will bring me special joy, given my background in music education and my dedication to education as the key to culture. In addition, I am hoping to develop a program with the Merit School of Music that will find and nurture new talent in the Chicago area, in addition to making Lyric more accessible to children and young people who clearly already have an interest in music. Ultimately, great acting singers are at the heart of opera, and we need to seek and develop more notable talents for which international stages are clamoring. I believe that there are amazing young voices right here in Chicago, and Lyric is poised to develop and potentially guide them right into the Ryan Opera Center.

Expanding the Role of the Civic Theater

Lyric's Civic Opera House is an architectural treasure; one of the most beautiful theaters in the world. The company is also in the advantageous position of owning the theater, which opens up the possibility of non-operatic programming. This type of presenting is occurring in many major theaters today as a way to increase revenue and bring in audiences who might not otherwise be familiar with the theater or the opera, and who might as a result be less intimidated about expanding their musical horizons; Kristin Chenoweth, Barbara Cook, and Sting have performed at the Metropolitan Opera, and similar upcoming series are planned at the Royal Opera in London.

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