



DENNIS HANTHORN - *Zurich General Director*

IO-II NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE ATLANTA OPERA RECEIVES \$9 MILLION DOLLAR BEQUEST

The Atlanta Opera announced today that it will be the recipient of a \$9 million bequest from longtime board member Barbara D. Stewart who died last year. This bequest is the largest gift in the Opera's history and according to Marc A. Scorca, president and CEO of OPERA America, the industry association for opera, one of the larger gifts on record to a North American opera company. At Stewart's request, half of the bequest will be used to grow The Atlanta Opera's permanent endowment, bringing that fund to \$5.6 million. The remainder will be placed into endowment and reserves. In honor of Stewart's passionate support of the Opera's artistic growth, The Atlanta Opera will dedicate one production each season to her memory, starting with the upcoming high-definition production of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, which runs February 26 through March 6 at the Cobb Energy Centre.

Atlanta Opera Board Chairman Greg Johnson remarks, "Barbara's gift is transformative. It means that this company, which has survived its fair share of financial predicaments, is here to stay. There is no doubt that this gift will serve as a catalyst for all fundraising efforts going forward. This bequest is a phenomenal example of how one individual can make an enormous impact on an arts organization and on the community. We will be eternally grateful for this loving act by our friend Barbara."

"There are hardly words to express the gratitude and appreciation we feel at this moment. This gift is truly humbling," comments Dennis Hanthorn, Zurich General Director of The Atlanta Opera. "As long as Barbara Stewart was associated with The Atlanta Opera, she was a tireless proponent of

keeping opera alive in Atlanta. Her bequest will truly make a remarkable difference to this company. Barbara was an extraordinary woman. She leaves a magnificent legacy to this company.”

About Barbara Stewart

Stewart was elected to The Atlanta Opera’s Board of Directors in January 1994. During her tenure, she served as president, vice president and treasurer. Her wisdom, business acumen and passion for opera were greatly admired and much appreciated. She was born on March 29, 1943 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She graduated summa cum laude in 1965 from Arcadia University in Glenside, Pennsylvania with a bachelor’s degree in economics and business administration and then studied economics at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of New York University. Her professional career began in economic research at the New York investment banking firm of Wood, Struthers & Winthrop. From 1974 through 1981 she was Corporate Economist for the Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, where her responsibilities included analyses of insurance markets and general economic conditions. In 1981, she formed Stewart Economics, Inc., a consulting firm that specialized in the insurance business. Her work included strategic planning, financial analyses and studies of competitive and regulatory issues in insurance markets. She was a Director of Main Street America Group Mutual Holdings, Inc., Insurance Services Office, Inc. and Capital Re Corporation. She was the author of several well known papers and co-author of numerous studies about the history, economics and regulation of the property-casualty insurance business.

Stewart loved to travel and her destinations were worldwide, including southeast Asia, China, Tibet and India as well as Canada and New Zealand, which she toured by motorcycle. In the US and Europe, a major focus of her travel was opera. She loved classical music. At home she enjoyed the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and local chamber groups, but was most passionate about opera. She is survived by her brother, Charles Dunbar, of Klamath Fall, Oregon and her former husband, Richard Stewart, of San Francisco, California.

About The Atlanta Opera

Founded in 1979, The Atlanta Opera is one of the finest regional opera companies in the nation, drawing audiences from the entire metropolitan Atlanta area as well as from the Southeast region. Led by Zurich General Director Dennis Hanthorn, The Atlanta Opera strives to expand the experience of its patrons with memorable and exciting opera performances reflecting the highest musical and theatrical standards, while supporting community and educational programs. The company also works to attract the finest international, national, and regional singers, conductors, stage directors and designers. Each season The Atlanta Opera presents three productions with four performances each at the Cobb Energy Centre.

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