



Media Release

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The Atlanta Opera Reaches “Budget One” Status For Its 2024-2025 Season The Atlanta Opera is one of the Top 10 U.S. Opera Companies

(For Immediate Release, Wednesday, December 13, 2023...Atlanta, GA) The Atlanta Opera Board of Directors is pleased to announce that the company will achieve “Budget One” status in the 45th Anniversary Season in 2024-2025. By reaching the \$15 million operational threshold designated by the industry service agency, Opera America, The Atlanta Opera joins 10 U.S.-based top-tier, Budget One companies -- of more than 180 -- which includes The Metropolitan Opera, the opera companies of San Francisco, Los Angeles, Houston, Seattle, Dallas, Santa Fe, Washington National Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

“General & Artistic Director Tomer Zvulun was selected to lead The Atlanta Opera in 2013 and he immediately went to work innovating and celebrating the art of opera in our city. We’ve created new ways of thinking about opera and supporting the next generation of creatives, artists, and audiences through our programs,” says Rhys Wilson, chairman of the Board of Directors for The Atlanta Opera citing 10 years of steady growth of the company. “Strong fundraising efforts and tight spending controls have stabilized the financial structure of the company while the caliber of the productions and the artists, both singers and musicians, has increased. We found a way to continue producing opera safely through the pandemic, which allowed us to keep our staff, donors, and patrons, to provide needed jobs to over 150 artists and to raise our profile internationally. As a result, for the last eight seasons, we have operated in the black.”

Community support for The Atlanta Opera has grown steadily over the past 10 years, including during the pandemic. Innovative programs, strategic partnerships, audience development, skillful fundraising, and careful increases in the investment made to producing top quality productions have all paid off in steady growth in ticket sales, fundraising, and the company’s reputation as an industry leader. The Atlanta Opera is especially proud of its “96-Hour Opera” Festival, which provides a forum for composers and librettists from underrecognized groups to tell their stories through the power of opera.

“As I start my second decade in a city that has become a real home for me and my family, it heartens me that after 45 years, this thriving, major international city is finally getting the major international opera company it deserves,” says Tomer Zvulun, Carl W. Knobloch, Jr. General & Artistic Director of The Atlanta Opera. “This encouraging moment, in a time of great bleakness, is a testament to the

determination of so many staff and board members, donors and community leaders. Working alongside these people has been one of the greatest honors of my life.”

Under Zvulun’s leadership, the company tripled its budget over a ten-year period. Among its many notable achievements, the company brought opera to the wider Atlanta community with performances in a wide array of venues; dynamic new productions of popular repertory and important contemporary works, often in Atlanta-led co-productions with other major companies, including Paul Moravec’s *The Shining*, Jake Hegge’s *Dead Man Walking*, Kevin Puts’ *Silent Night*, Mason Bates’s *[R]evolution of Steve Jobs* and the launch of the Southeast’s first ever cycle of Wagner’s “Ring” operas; and partnerships with other leading Atlanta performing arts and educational organizations such as Morehouse College and the Alliance Theater. During the pandemic, when many arts organizations throughout the world were forced to put their work on hold, the company gave 40 live performances as part of their “Big Tent” series and created The Atlanta Opera Film Studio to bring the company’s work to an international audience. Recognizing their achievements and commitment to innovation, *BBC Music Magazine* noted, “Whoever said opera is a museum culture hasn’t told Atlanta Opera.” PBS Newshour focused on the company in a feature highlighting how some performing arts organizations had adapted to the serious challenges presented by the pandemic.

Key areas of growth have included expansion of repertory and new works, education and community partnerships, excellence in mainstage production and industry partnerships, audience development and engagement, and organizational infrastructure.

Program Initiatives

- 2015 – **Discoveries Series** (Expanding repertory, Community Partnerships)
- 2016 – **Studio Young Artists** (Education, Industry)
- 2017 – **Received an International Opera Award**
- 2017 – **Veteran’s Free ticket program** (Community Partnerships, Audience development)
- 2018 – **Harvard Business Review Case Study of Innovation in Opera developed and taught**
- 2018 – **Tomer Zvulun invited to present a TED talk “Innovation In Opera”**
- 2020 – **Podcast Series** (Audience development, Education)
- 2020 – **Come as You Are Series** (Audience development, Engagement)
- 2020 – **Big Tent Events** (All initiatives)
- 2020 – **The Atlanta Opera Film Studio** (Education, Industry, Audience development, Engagement)
- 2020 – **Virtual Education Tour** (Education, Industry)
- 2021 – **Launch of 45 by 45** fundraising campaign (Organizational infrastructure)
- 2022 – **Launch of 96-Hour Opera initiative (Industry, EDI, Audience development)**
- 2023 – **Launch of “The Ring” cycle productions** (All initiatives)

Upcoming Atlanta Opera productions in the 2023-2024 Season include the classic masterpiece *La bohème* by Giacomo Puccini (Jan 20 – 28, 2024), a new production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by Benjamin Britten (Mar 2 – 10, 2024), the second opera in The Atlanta Opera’s “Ring” cycle *Die Walküre* by Richard Wagner (April 27 – May 5, 2024), and the **96-Hour Opera Festival** (June 14 – 17, 2024).

“As an art form that delivers complex and compelling storytelling, opera, and especially the productions of The Atlanta Opera, resonate deeply and intimately with audiences. We are dedicated to making a

space for many stories and voices to be heard,” says Immediate Past Board Chair Cathy Callaway Adams. “The future work of The Atlanta Opera will continue to inspire community, break barriers, and celebrate the power of our human connections.”

About The Atlanta Opera

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The Atlanta Opera’s mission is to break the boundaries of opera to create exceptional experiences for audiences everywhere. Founded in 1979, the company works with world-renowned singers, conductors, directors, and designers who seek to enhance the art form. Under the leadership of internationally recognized stage director and Carl W. Knobloch, Jr. General & Artistic Director Tomer Zvulun, The Atlanta Opera expanded from three to four mainstage productions at Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre and launched the acclaimed “Discoveries” event series and the innovative 96-Hour Opera Project. In recent years, the company has been named among the “Best of 2015” by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, has been nominated for a 2016 International Opera Award, and won ArtsATL’s 2019 Luminary Award for Community Engagement in recognition of its successful Veterans Program in partnership with the Home Depot Foundation. In addition, The Atlanta Opera was featured in a 2018 Harvard Business School case study about successful organizational growth, and Zvulun presented a TEDx Talk at Emory University titled “The Ambidextrous Opera Company, or Opera in the Age of iPhones.” During the COVID-19 pandemic, The Atlanta Opera was one of the only companies in the world to create a full, alternative season, consisting of no less than 40 live performances in two different outdoor venues, including a revolutionary custom-designed circus tent. The fundraising goal was tripled, and four new productions were created, each of which employed 150 cast and crew members and staff. The critically acclaimed productions and concerts were streamed in HD in the newly created streaming platform “[Atlanta Opera Film Studio](#),” allowing The Atlanta Opera to reach a global audience. National media coverage of the “pandemic season” included features in the *Wall Street Journal* and *PBS NewsHour*.

For more information, visit atlantaopera.org.

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