

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Townsend Opera Players Announces the Appointment of Dr. Joseph Wiggett as Artistic Director

The Board of Directors announces the new Artistic Director of Townsend Opera Players will be Dr. Joseph Wiggett, effective immediately. Dr. Wiggett currently serves as an Associate Professor of Voice at California State University, Stanislaus. He is also the former Director of the School of Fine and Performing Arts at CSU Stanislaus. Dr. Wiggett will continue in his position at CSU Stanislaus while serving as Artistic Director of Townsend Opera Players.

Carl Bengston, President of the Board of Directors and Chair of the search committee for a new Artistic Director, stated, “Dr. Wiggett was selected from among several fine candidates for the position after an exhaustive search of the regional pool of artistic and operatic talent and experience. It is clear that his organizational experience and academic credentials will benefit TOP tremendously and help to maintain the company’s premier position in the regional performing arts community.”

Of the appointment, Dr. Wiggett said, “I am looking forward to being part of a new era for opera in our region. With the recent addition of professional set and costumes designers and a top-flight orchestral conductor as part of the permanent production team, coupled with enhancements in the orchestra and the ability to perform in the Gallo Center, TOP stands poised to produce Opera and American Lyric Theater on a scale never before witnessed in the region. Even in the current challenging economic climate, the many systemic changes that have been made recently will allow TOP to flourish as never before. It is truly an exciting time to be joining the company.”

Matthew Buckman, Executive Director of Townsend Opera Players, said “We are very pleased to have Joe join the organization. He brings a wealth of professional experience to the position, he has established a positive reputation in the community, and he is well-connected to artistic resources locally, throughout the region, and across the country. He also brings a practical approach to artistic programming, which will serve the organization very well as we manage the necessary development of the organization in this tough economic environment.”

Dr. Wiggett becomes just the second artistic director in the company’s twenty-six year history, filling the position in the organization vacated by the passing of founder Erik Buck Townsend. As a past member of the Juilliard Opera Center, the Lyric Opera of Chicago Center for American Artists, and the Prague Mozart Academy, Dr. Wiggett has performed over three dozen operatic roles and brings a wealth of hands-on experience to the studio and stage. He has given recitals throughout the United States, Europe, and the former Soviet Union and is the recipient of numerous awards and honors including three Birgit Nilsson prizes, as well as two grants from the Puccini Foundation.

As a contest singer, Dr. Wiggett has ranked among the finest in the country and has taken first place honors in such prestigious competitions as the Metropolitan Opera New England Regional Auditions, the Chicago Union Civic and Arts Leagues Competition, the Center for Contemporary Opera International Competition - held in New York City, and he is the only three-time winner of the Lillian Nordica Prize.

Among his major debuts are roles with the New York City Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, a solo recital in the Carnegie Hall Weill Recital Series, and his Lincoln Center debut at Alice Tully Hall as the baritone soloist in Orff's *Carmina Burana*. As a concert performer, Dr. Wiggett has appeared with numerous orchestras including the Manhattan, Boulder, Modesto, Bangor, Portland, Milwaukee and Colorado Symphonies. He holds degrees in Music Education from the University of Maine, a Masters Degree in Performance from the Manhattan School of Music and a Doctorate in Vocal Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Colorado, Boulder.

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