

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Townsend Opera Players Announces the Death of Founder and Artistic Director Erik Buck Townsend

Townsend Opera Players regrets to announce that Erik Buck Townsend, Founder and Artistic Director, died on Tuesday, September 9, 2008, at the age of 71. Mr. Townsend, who was diagnosed with lung cancer in November 2007, passed away quietly at his home surrounded by family.

“We are deeply saddened by the loss of our Founder,” said Matthew Buckman, Executive Director of Townsend Opera Players. “Buck has done a tremendous amount for our community, and we now all share the responsibility of ensuring that his dream for opera in the central valley continues. I look forward to working diligently with the staff, the Board of Directors, and the community to ensure that his vision for opera in our region continues to thrive.”

Carl Bengston, President of the Board of Directors, said “We are all truly heartbroken to lose Buck. He and the Board of Directors have gone to great lengths over the past two seasons to ensure the long-term viability of Townsend Opera Players. After having worked so hard for the past twenty-five years to ensure that Modesto has an opera company, it would have been nice for him to enjoy the fruit of that labor for a little while longer.”

Mr. Townsend, born and raised in Modesto, enjoyed a long and successful career as an international opera soloist, singing leading tenor roles in major opera houses throughout the United States and Europe. In 1982, at the age of 44, Mr. Townsend returned to Modesto and founded Townsend Opera Players. Since its first performances in 1983, Townsend Opera Players has presented over 75 productions of the operatic and musical theater repertoire.

Mr. Townsend is survived by his wife, Erika, daughter Lisa, and grandchildren Lucian and Xanthe. He was preceded in death by his daughter Kristina, who passed away days prior to her thirteenth birthday after a long battle with leukemia.

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