

# CALGARY OPERA ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF NEW GENERAL DIRECTOR AND CEO

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**December 15, 2017** (Calgary, Alberta) – Calgary Opera has announced the appointment of a new General Director and CEO, effective January, 2018.

**Dr. Keith Cerny** will come to Calgary in January from The Dallas Opera, where he acted as General Director and CEO from 2010 until present.

“We are very pleased to welcome Dr. Keith Cerny to the position of Calgary Opera’s General Director and CEO,” said Michael Brown, Chair of the Calgary Opera Board of Directors. “After an exhaustive international search for the right candidate to take Calgary Opera to next level of growth, we believe we have found the perfect candidate in Keith, given his wealth of experience from an artistic, business and operational standpoint.”

Keith joined The Dallas Opera (TDO) in 2010 as General Director & CEO and “set out to transform [this] dowager duchess [of a company] into a blooming, energetic youth” (Classical Voice America). In his time at Dallas, Keith worked with the Dallas Opera’s Board of Directors and opera staff to stabilize the company’s finances and significantly grow the endowment, leading to five consecutive balanced operating results – the first time TDO has achieved this result in 23 years. He has also recruited an accomplished new Music Director with an international reputation, Emmanuel Villaume; hired Principal Guest Conductor, Nicole Paiement and Guest Concertmaster and Guest Conductor Peter Manning; significantly broadened the company’s programming strategy and commissioned three world premieres; launched the company’s free public simulcast series, which has reached over 75,000 patrons in North Texas, the U.S. and the U.K.; expanded the Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition from a regional competition to a national one with finals with orchestra; and forged new artistic collaborations with the Dallas Theater Center, the Dallas Children’s Theater, University of North Texas, SMU, the Perot Museum of Nature and Science, the Dallas Holocaust museum, Texas Ballet Theater, and the Dallas Museum of Art. He also conceived and launched the Linda and Mitch Hart Institute for Women Conductors, which held its inaugural program in late 2015. In 2011, he was elected to the Board of Directors of Opera America, where he also served as Chair of the Strategy Committee. He was recognized with the Arts Leadership award in 2016 by the Dallas Historical Society, and was also named one of the 500 most powerful business leaders in Dallas-Fort Worth by D CEO for 2017. Keith was also the recipient of the 2017 Visionary Arts Leader Award from the Business Council for the Arts.

“When we began our search, we wanted to find a candidate that could champion and manage a multitude of areas, primarily artistically for the artform, but also with business acumen and the ability to grow the organization,” said Jacqueline Pyke, Chair of the Search Committee. “Our search was international in nature, and in the end we came to believe that having Keith on board serves Calgary Opera best in all of these areas.”

From a programming point of view, Keith has emphasized new productions, especially those involving the use of projections and computer technologies; commissions, late 20th and 21st century works; and less-familiar works, all in conjunction with popular classics. Under his tenure, The Dallas

Opera has presented new productions of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* with projections by Elaine J. McCarthy, and a production of Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* using projections, as well as the contemporary operas Peter Maxwell Davies's *The Lighthouse* and Tod Machover's *Death and the Powers*. In 2015, the company presented three world premieres that Keith commissioned: Joby Talbot and Gene Scheer's *Everest*, Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's *Great Scott*, and Mark Adamo's *Becoming Santa Claus*.

Prior to assuming the position in Dallas, Keith pursued a broad career as a businessman, technologist, and musician. He developed his early interest in classical music and opera by singing with the San Francisco Boys Chorus and the California Bach Society, and performed extensively as a solo pianist and chamber music player in his teens. He subsequently studied Music and Physics at the University of California at Berkeley.

After graduating with highest honors in both degrees, he won a Fulbright Scholarship to London. There he studied at the English National Opera and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and performed and coached regularly for four years. Following his return from London, he worked for two years for the accounting firm Touche Ross & Co. in San Francisco before attending Harvard Business School. While living in Boston, Keith also accompanied voice students in the studio in the Chair of the Voice department at New England Conservatory.

After graduating with honors from HBS, Keith spent nearly 15 years in management consulting, working first for McKinsey & Co. in London and Atlanta, and then as a telecom and high tech Partner with Accenture in San Francisco. During this period, Keith also completed a Ph.D. in Econometrics and Economic Development Policy from the Open University in the U.K. As a consultant, he worked on numerous pro bono projects for opera companies in parallel with his paid consulting work, including the San Francisco Opera, Washington National Opera and Spoleto Festival USA. He was hired by the Board of the San Francisco Opera in 2004 as the Executive Director (COO) and CFO. During his tenure at SF Opera, the company achieved three years of balanced operating results, following an institution-threatening downturn prior to his arrival. He then worked for Russell Reynolds in San Francisco, recruiting CEOs and senior executives for non-profits, before taking over as CEO of SheetMusicPlus.com – the largest online retailer of sheet music. He left SheetMusicPlus.com in 2010 to become General Director & CEO of The Dallas Opera. And his wife Jennifer, have four children, and are looking forward to a new journey in Canada.

Keith will not be available for interviews until beginning of his tenure in mid-January, 2018. Michael Brown, Chair of the Calgary Opera Board will be available for interviews **in the afternoon** of December 15, 2017.