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**DAVID DiCHIERA HONORED BY REPUBLIC OF ITALY**

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**MOT Founder Awarded "Commander In The Order Of Merit Of The Italian Republic"**

DETROIT, April 25, 2016...On Saturday, April 23, Michigan Opera Theatre founder and artistic director, Dr. David DiChiera, was bestowed the extraordinary honor of "Commander in the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic" The award is given at the behest of the President of Italy.

A near-capacity audience for Michigan Opera Theatre's production of *Macbeth* enjoyed a special pre-curtain ceremony presented by the Italian Consul. "As Consul of Italy in Detroit, it is with great pleasure and distinct honor that I present Maestro David DiChiera with the award of 'Commander in the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic,' which has been conferred upon him by the President of the Republic of Italy," said Maria Luisa Lepressa. "The award is in recognition of Maestro DiChiera's lifelong commitment to the dissemination of the Italian language and culture and his dynamic promotion of Italian opera through the world renowned Michigan Opera Theatre." A medal of honor was given to DiChiera at the conclusion of the ceremony.

"This esteemed honor is a tremendous point of pride for me," said DiChiera. "I am humbled and grateful beyond words, and I just can't help but think of my parents who emigrated to the United States in 1920, and how proud they would be that their beloved country of origin has honored their son in such an extraordinary manner." DiChiera concluded,



“My heartfelt gratitude to Maria Luisa Lepressa, Consul of Italy in Detroit, and, of course, to Sergio Matterella, President of the Republic of Italy, for this grand honor.”

David DiChiera is the founder and artistic director of Michigan Opera Theatre. Serving as the company’s general director for more than four decades, DiChiera’s dynamic leadership resulted in Michigan Opera Theatre’s standing as one of the nation’s leading opera companies. As an impresario, David DiChiera is celebrated for his commitment to promoting diversity in opera, having launched the careers of some of opera’s greatest stars, including Kathleen Battle, Leona Mitchell, Deborah Voigt, and Maria Ewing. DiChiera is also a noted composer; his music has been performed around the world. In 2007 his first full length opera, *Cyrano*, was premiered at the Detroit Opera House - the opera was highly acclaimed by critics and audiences alike, and has subsequently been premiered in Florida and Philadelphia. In addition to his contributions to the music world, DiChiera has proven himself a great civic visionary with the establishment of the Detroit Opera House (opened 1996), which is widely viewed as the catalyst for the revitalization of the city of Detroit. DiChiera, the son of Italian immigrants, is a father of two daughters, and grandfather to three grandchildren.

The **Order of Merit of the Italian Republic** (Italian: Ordine al merito della Repubblica Italiana) is awarded for "merit acquired by the nation" in the fields of literature, the arts, economy, public service, and social, philanthropic and humanitarian activities and for long and conspicuous service in civilian and military careers - it is the highest honor bestowed by the Republic.