

MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE

THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION AWARDS MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE A GRANT TO SUPPORT CONTEMPORARY OPERA PRODUCTIONS

* * *

DETROIT, December 2, 2015 - Wayne S. Brown, Michigan Opera Theatre's President and CEO, today announced that Michigan Opera Theatre has received a \$600,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, to support the company's contemporary opera productions in main-stage and community venues for three seasons (2015 - 2018). This award allows the company to continue to build on the success of its recent Opera of our Time initiative, which featured the highly successful productions of William Bolcom's *A View from the Bridge* in 2014 and Robert Xavier Rodriguez's *Frida* in 2015.

"New operatic works and community relationships are at the heart of MOT's strategic plan, with efforts to achieve an enhanced level of programming quality, diversity, and engagement. Underscoring the depth of MOT's commitment to community engagement, this past spring, due to the overwhelming success of the production of *Frida*, the company added a sixth performance," Brown said.

The grant will be used to support the production of six contemporary operas, three on the main stage and three in community venues. Year one of the grant period will include two productions in MOT's 2015-16 schedule. This includes Mieczysław Weinberg's *The Passenger*, which was performed at the Detroit Opera House and benefitted from the participation of 62 community organizations and 81 individuals as partners in its presentation. The second will be Aaron Copland's *The Tender Land*. This production will feature MOT's resident artists in the principle roles. *The Tender Land* also continues MOT's renewed community initiative with performances in two venues: the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts in Clinton Township and the Heinz C. Prechter Educational and Performing Arts Center in Taylor, Michigan. Productions for years two and three will be announced in the spring of 2016.

"The Foundation's investment provides the impetus for an enhanced commitment to the ongoing innovation and risk-taking measures required to drive artistic growth and to enhance audience engagement," Brown said.

The production of contemporary opera is extremely important to the evolution of the art form. With this support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, MOT continues to play a significant role in the production of the next generation of the repertoire. MOT Founder and Artistic Director David DiChiera said, "Subject matter, themes, and characters are critical. An opera must be topical to engage both existing opera patrons and newcomers. With the company's presentation of *The Passenger*, we found that extraordinary community engagement underscores the impact of a relevant, contemporary storyline."

-more-

###

About Michigan Opera Theatre

Michigan Opera Theatre (Wayne S. Brown, President and CEO; Dr. David DiChiera, Founder and Artistic Director), one of the nation's most vibrant nonprofit arts organizations, is committed to presenting opera and dance of the highest artistic caliber. Founded in 1971, the company's mission is to serve as a major cultural resource to the state of Michigan and the city of Detroit. Visit the website at www.michiganopera.org.

About The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Founded in 1969, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation endeavors to strengthen, promote, and, where necessary, defend the contributions of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the well-being of diverse and democratic societies by supporting exemplary institutions of higher education and culture as they renew and provide access to an invaluable heritage of ambitious, path-breaking work.