



For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Erica Hobbs
(313) 237-3403
ehobbs@motopera.org

The Detroit Tigers and Michigan Opera Theatre Announce Partnership

*Year of community activities to explore the role arts and sports have played in race relations,
culminating with "The Summer King" opera*

Detroit, June 27, 2017 - The Detroit Tigers and Michigan Opera Theatre have announced a year-long partnership exploring the role arts and sports have played in improving race relations. The organizations made the announcement June 27 during a panel discussion featuring representatives of the two organizations and local experts at Comerica Park. The partnership, "Take Me Out to the Opera," will include a series of community activities and culminate with MOT's May production of Daniel Sonenberg's "The Summer King," an opera about Negro Leagues baseball player Josh Gibson, who played for the Pittsburgh Crawfords and Homestead Grays.

"One of the opportunities available through arts and sports is an ability to bring people together, especially across racial divisions," said MOT CEO Wayne S. Brown. "We are proud to partner with the Detroit Tigers to celebrate those athletes and artists who, like Josh Gibson, were catalysts for change in their communities."

The announcement coincides with the Tigers' annual Negro Leagues Weekend, honoring former Negro Leagues players and the former local team, the Detroit Stars.

"As the Detroit Tigers host their 23rd annual Negro Leagues Tribute Game this weekend, we are delighted to launch this partnership with the Michigan Opera Theatre," said Ellen Hill Zeringue, Vice President of Marketing for the Detroit Tigers. "Baseball is rich in history, and this collaboration provides the platform to create an ongoing dialogue surrounding sports, art and race."

The panel was moderated by Detroit Free Press Columnist Rochelle Riley and featured:

- Ron Teasley, former Negro Leagues baseball player with the New York Cubans and the Olean Oilers
- Rod Allen, former Detroit Tiger and current color analyst on Fox Sports Detroit
- Charles Ferrell, Vice President of Public Programs at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History
- Daniel Sonenberg, composer of "The Summer King"
- Steven Mercurio, MOT conductor of "The Summer King"

"Take Me Out to the Opera" will incorporate additional partners to provide programming that connects Metro Detroit with the themes of "The Summer King," including the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American

History, the Detroit Historical Society, the Detroit Public Library, the Josh Gibson Foundation, Rosedale Park Community House and Hamtramck Stadium. It will frame sports and musical histories side-by-side as institutions with groundbreaking African American personalities that led the way to integration.

Preliminary programming includes:

- Residencies at Detroit schools where students will create their own operatic piece which relates the history of the Detroit's Negro League baseball team, the Detroit Stars, with modern-day themes of equity and inclusion.
- Performances and lectures at various locations (The Charles H. Wright Museum, Rosedale Park Community House, etc.) which illustrate the trailblazing achievements of featured individuals from the worlds of music and sports.
- An updated production of MOT's "I, Too, Sing America", a lecture-recital performance illustrating the contributions of African Americans to classical music and sports.

MOT will present "The Summer King" May 12-20 at the Detroit Opera House. It tells the story of Gibson, considered one of the best baseball players of all time, whose tragic life ended just before the integration of major league baseball. It explores themes of struggle, addiction and overcoming adversity. "The Summer King" is a co-production with Pittsburgh Opera., and is supported in part by grants from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more information and tickets, visit <http://www.michiganopera.org/opera/the-summer-king/>.

###

About Michigan Opera Theatre

Michigan Opera Theatre (Wayne S. Brown, President and CEO; Stephen Lord, Principal Conductor; Dr. David DiChiera, Founder and Artistic Director Emeritus), 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 Detroit Tigers

The Detroit Tigers, Inc., a charter member of the American League in 1901, have won four World Series and 11 American League pennants. An Ilitch organization, the Tigers play their home games at Comerica Park located within The District Detroit, one of the largest sports and entertainment developments in the country. Other Ilitch companies include: Little Caesars Pizza, Blue Line Foodservice Distribution, the Detroit Red Wings, Olympia Development of Michigan, Little Caesars Pizza Kit Fundraising Program, Ilitch Holdings, Inc., MotorCity Casino Hotel and Champion Foods. For more information, visit www.Tigers.com, www.DistrictDetroit.com and www.IlitchCompanies.com.