



For Immediate Release

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

Ethan Davidson Named Chairman of Michigan Opera Theatre

DETROIT, Oct. 8 - Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) announced today the election of Ethan Davidson as Chairman of its Board of Directors and Trustees. Davidson succeeds Rick Williams, who has served as Chairman for the past 17 years. Williams announced earlier this year that he would not stand for re-election. The transition, which will include a restructuring of the board, will take effect at the upcoming Annual Meeting Nov. 14.

Davidson currently serves as Chairman of the Grants Committee of the William Davidson Foundation. The private family foundation is dedicated to advancing the economic, cultural and civic vitality of Southeast Michigan, the State of Israel and the Jewish community. In addition to his work at the Foundation, Davidson serves on numerous boards in the Detroit area, including his role as a Director of the Motown Museum. At the University of Michigan, he earned a BA in English and did graduate work in Middle Eastern History and Islamic Law. He has also studied Jewish Philosophy at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

A professional singer and songwriter who has recorded 10 albums and toured throughout North America and Europe, Davidson has enjoyed a lifelong interest in music. His involvement with MOT harkens back to his college years when he often attended opera with MOT's late founder and impresario David DiChiera.

"This will be a serious challenge and a real opportunity, that's why I took this role," he said. "I get excited when I think about all of the compelling new productions which will grace our stage and other communal spaces, the wider dialogues in which we will participate as we bring our artistic voice to issues of communal concern, and the new friends we hope will fill Detroit's beautiful opera house. We can never rest on our laurels. We have work to do, but we're starting from a very good place, and I'm excited to be part of the team."

Williams steps down after a successful tenure, known as one of MOT's most consistently generous donors and its most vocal advocate and problem-solver. He led MOT through the 2008 recession, relentlessly negotiating with the company's consortium of debtors to forgive \$7 million of debt in return for paying \$11 million cash within six months. He then provided a significant personal leadership gift and influenced other MOT supporters to join him. In 2018, he was one of only four people nationwide to receive Opera America's National Opera Trustee Award, which recognizes outstanding trustees of U.S. opera companies for exemplary

leadership, generosity and audience-building efforts on behalf of their respective organizations.

Williams said that he cherishes his time at MOT working alongside DiChiera, MOT President and CEO Wayne Brown and the MOT Board and Trustees. DiChiera invited him to join the Board following past chairmen and community leaders Robert Dewar and Lynn Townsend, the company's only other chairmen in its nearly 50-year history.

"Serving as Chairman of Michigan Opera Theatre has been an exciting and fulfilling opportunity and I've enjoyed it immensely," he said. "Surmounting our financial issues during the recession and developing plans for the future have been extremely gratifying but it's time to let somebody else take the reins. We couldn't have come up with a better candidate than Ethan. I'm thrilled that he's agreed to accept the position."

In tandem with the leadership transition, MOT's Governance Committee voted to restructure the Board of Directors that will now include three Vice Chairs, a Treasurer and a Secretary.

The new officers are:

- JoAnn Danto, Vice Chair: Former dance professor and soloist with the Joffrey Ballet, the National Ballet and other ballet companies throughout the U.S. and Europe
- Peter Oleksiak, Vice Chair: Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer at DTE Energy
- Ankur Rungta, Vice Chair: Chief Executive Officer, C3 Industries
- Enrico Digirolamo, Treasurer: Board of II-VI Incorporated, Board of Garsite Progress, Chairman of Good Travel Software, former Chief Financial Officer, Covisint
- Gene P. Bowen, Secretary: Co-chairperson, Business Practice Group, Bodman PLC

As MOT approaches its 50th anniversary in 2021, Brown said the time is right for the organization to look forward to next steps in leadership with its governance.

"It's our job to ensure that Michigan Opera Theatre and the Detroit Opera House continue to play a leading role in the cultural life of our great city," he said. "I'm delighted to see a new generation of leadership devoted to maintaining our relevancy to opera and dance audiences of all ages and tastes. I'm confident we have the right team in place for the future."

Williams will be honored during MOT's season-opening gala concert Oct. 12.

###

About Michigan Opera Theatre

Michigan Opera Theatre, 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 by Dr. David DiChiera, the company's mission is to serve as a major cultural resource to the state of Michigan and the city of Detroit. The organization is led by President and CEO Wayne S. Brown and Chairman of the Board R. Jamison Williams. Visit the website at www.michiganopera.org.