

CARL BENGSTON APPOINTED INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A former President of the Townsend Opera Board of Directors has been chosen to lead the organization as it finishes the current season and plans for the future.

Modesto, California – November 20, 2017

Townsend Opera is pleased to announce that Carl Bengston has agreed to serve as the company's Interim Executive Director, effective immediately. The decision of the company's Board of Directors follows the resignation earlier this year of former General Director, Matthew Buckman, and the recently announced impending departure of current Managing Director, Charla Jeanne Lawson, who has accepted a new position out of state.



Freda Motto, President of the Board of Directors, said "Mr. Bengston has the combination of management experience and commitment to Townsend Opera that we will need as we assemble a new leadership team for the company." In addition to helping the Board of Directors find a new permanent Executive Director, Mr. Bengston will also be working with Maestro Ryan Murray to complete the company's current season with its production of *Madame Butterfly*, and plan the 2018/19 season, which will be Townsend Opera's 35th consecutive season.

Mr. Bengston said, "I am honored to be given this opportunity to repay Townsend Opera for some of the wonderful artistry I have experienced and been a part of since moving to the area nearly 20 years ago. I intend to do everything I can to insure that such experiences continue to be available to our community for decades to come."

About Carl Bengston

Mr. Bengston served as President of the Townsend Opera Board of Directors from 2006-2009, and has performed regularly in minor roles and as a member of the chorus in Townsend Opera productions since 2000. In addition to his operatic endeavors with Townsend Opera over the years, he frequently performs in plays and musicals staged locally. Mr. Bengston served as Dean of the University Library at Stanislaus State from 1999-2009, and retired from his career as an academic administrator in 2015.

About Townsend Opera

Townsend Opera was founded in 1983 by Modesto native Erik Buck Townsend, a graduate of Modesto High School, who had a successful international career as an opera singer. Buck Townsend worked tirelessly to lead the company for 25 years directing, conducting, and singing in performances, building sets, and organizing costumes. After being diagnosed with cancer in 2007, Buck and then-Board President Carl Bengston led an initiative to establish second-generation leadership to ensure the company would continue beyond his lifetime and thrive in its new home at the Gallo Center for the Arts. In February 2008, the board appointed Matthew Buckman as the company's first Executive Director and Ryan Murray

as Music Director. Both worked with Buck until his passing in September 2008, to secure the Company's place in the community.

As its artistic profile has expanded over the past decade, the Company has been fortunate to welcome to our community some of the greatest artists and personalities in the field, including legendary composers Jake Heggie (*Dead Man Walking*) and Ricky Ian Gordon (*The Grapes of Wrath*), author and advocate Sister Helen Prejean, singers like Leah Crocetto and Irene Roberts, who are now gracing the stages of the finest opera houses in the world, and some of the leading stage directors working today. Townsend Opera is committed to providing the community with access to innovative operatic experiences as well as to the most popular and well known operas in the repertoire.

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