



FESTIVAL
OPERA

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Festival Opera Receives Significant Grant from the Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation

Grant to Partially Underwrite West Coast Premiere of *Our Town* in 2007

Walnut Creek, CA, June 7, 2006 – Festival Opera, the largest regional opera company in the East Bay, announced today that it has been awarded a \$150,000 grant from the Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation to be distributed over two years. The grant will support donor and audience development, marketing initiatives and overall operating costs for the 2006 and 2007 seasons. In addition, the grant will partially underwrite the West Coast premiere of *Our Town*, a new opera by renowned composer Ned Rorem, based on the classic drama by Thornton Wilder.

Our Town made its debut this past February at the Indiana University Opera Theater, one of the most prestigious collegiate opera programs in the country. Festival Opera joins five other American co-commissioning companies, which are presenting the opera over the next year. The West Coast premiere fits well into Festival Opera's goal to present creative, highly professional opera productions and supports the efforts of the local community in making Walnut Creek a destination for new and unique arts experiences.

"The Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation was created to enhance the quality of life for the residents of Contra Costa County," said Kathleen Odne, executive director of the Leshner Foundation. "We see the grant given to Festival Opera as part of our commitment to the visual and performing arts that are essential to a vibrant and healthy community."

More...

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“We are deeply appreciative of the continued support the Leshner Foundation has shown for our mission over the years. We strive to make artistic choices that showcase emerging talent, excite opera enthusiasts, and entice new audiences to this rich art form,” said Helen Sheaff, executive director for Festival Opera. “This grant will help us continue to provide opera productions at the level of quality and professionalism that audiences have come to expect from Festival Opera,”

About The Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation

Since 1994, the Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation has awarded grants totaling more than \$26 million and reaching citizens in all parts of Contra Costa County. True to the original wishes of Dean and Margaret Leshner, the Foundation continues to build on the strengths of the community by supporting organizations and programs in the areas of education, the cultural arts and services in support of children and families.

About Festival Opera

Festival Opera, the largest regional opera company in the East Bay, is now in its 15th year. Founded in 1991, it is considered a showcase for young American singers, directors and conductors. Cast lists, artist photos, synopses, and additional information on the company and its productions can be found in the Press Room section of Festival Opera’s website www.festivalopera.com. Tickets are on sale now for the 2006 season which includes Puccini’s *Tosca* and Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*.

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