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**For Immediate Release**

**Governors State University's Center for Performing Arts Launches Opera & Beyond Endowment Fund**

University Park, IL (February 2, 2021) – Governors State University (GSU) Center for Performing Arts (the Center) is pleased to announce the establishment of the Opera & Beyond Fund. Inspired by one of the Center's original board members and opera aficionado, Inge Marra, the newly launched fund will guarantee the continuation of classical vocal music, including the *Opera Up Close* series, as well as art songs, operetta and classical musical theatre. And, of course, will ensure the continuation of operatic talent showcases from Chicagoland and beyond.

An anonymous donor will match every donation and pledge dollar for dollar through March 1, 2021.

This exciting opportunity will allow the Opera & Beyond Fund to grow into a secure endowment, to supplement artist fees and production partnerships but can also be used towards copyright costs, development of staging and props, and marketing outreach when necessary. Looking ahead to the future, *Opera Up Close* seeks to build momentum by expanding programming ideas to include full opera productions, incorporate instrumental accompaniment, collaborate with other cultural organizations in the south suburbs and beyond, introduce new operatic voices and create new thematic programs that educate, entertain and inspire.

The *Opera Up Close* series premiered September 26, 2010. Since then, the series has offered south suburban audiences the opportunity to hear operatic music presented in new

ways; through intimate settings, opera in English, opera for children, and presenting musical pieces with humor and energy. *Opera Up Close* invites audiences to experience classical music in unexpected and accessible ways, enticing them to fall in love with this beautiful art form. Seated on stage with the singers just feet away, each audience member is able to intimately experience the power and the beauty of the human voice while sampling themed dishes and desserts. From Mozart to Bernstein, the singers bring a wealth of experience and artistry to bear on a wide array of musical styles.

Board member Inge Marra shares, “I was introduced to opera as a child, growing up in post-WWII Berlin, a city that was bombed. For me, opera was where we escaped our sorrows. So in hard times, I have always returned to opera. One can consume opera in many forms – but live is best. In a traditional opera house, one sits in the balcony or in the orchestra section and the voice is there. But with *Opera Up Close*, to be so near to the unamplified voice is an experience like no other.”

Individuals or organizations interested in contributing to the Opera & Beyond Fund can do so online at [www.govst.edu/OperaDonation](http://www.govst.edu/OperaDonation)

*Opera Cabaret* will stream on the Center’s YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/GSUCenter>) through February 14 at midnight. Tickets are available on a pay-what-you-can-scale from \$5 to \$25 per household.

For more information, visit [CenterTickets.net](http://CenterTickets.net)

To purchase tickets and access the production, visit [www.govst.edu/OperaCabaret](http://www.govst.edu/OperaCabaret).

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