

The Metropolitan Opera

For immediate release

Contact:
Elena Park/Sommer Hixson/Peter Clark
Metropolitan Opera
(212) 870-7457
press@metopera.org

The Metropolitan Opera Reaches Groundbreaking Agreements with its Unions and Develops an Extraordinary Range of Media Partnerships to Build Audiences and Expand its Reach

Arrangements with National CineMedia, Cineplex Entertainment, Odeon/UCI, RealNetworks, PBS, and Thirteen/WNET Announced

New York, NY (September 6, 2006) – Following extensive, groundbreaking negotiations with its three largest unions, the Metropolitan Opera announced plans today that will revolutionize the live electronic distribution of its productions. In an historic first for any major performing arts institution in this country or abroad, this season the Met will use advanced distribution platforms and state-of-the-art technology to attract new audiences and reach millions of opera fans around the world. Beginning on December 30, the Met will transmit six of its performances live in high definition into movie theaters in the United States, Canada, and Europe that have been equipped with high-definition projection systems and satellite dishes. In addition, over 100 live performances will be broadcast either over the internet or on digital radio.

“The unions have kindly granted us control over the creation and distribution of our electronic content,” said **Peter Gelb**, the Met’s new general manager. “This is a unique opportunity to raise our profile and grow our audience. Opera will now enter the digital era.”

The Met’s orchestra (**Local 802**), chorus and ballet (**AGMA**), and stagehands (**Local One**) all voted overwhelmingly in favor of the new media agreements over the summer following extensive negotiations. Under the terms of the new agreements, the Met’s rich historical archive of some 1500 radio broadcasts from the past 75 years will become available as part of an audio on-demand service, with up to 500 of them ready for this season. The Met will have the right to

PRESS DEPARTMENT

The Metropolitan Opera
Lincoln Center
New York, NY 10023

Press: 212.870.7457
General: 212.799.3100
Fax: 212.870.7606

press@metopera.org
www.metopera.org

distribute its new productions and its historic radio and television programs on virtually all electronic formats and will be entering into agreements with a wide range of media partners.

The Met's six Saturday matinees that will be produced in high definition for live audio and visual distribution into several hundred movie theaters around the world are the new English-language adaptation of Julie Taymor's *Magic Flute*, conducted by James Levine, on December 30; *I Puritani* starring Anna Netrebko on January 6; the world premiere production of Tan Dun's *The First Emperor* with Plácido Domingo in the title role on January 13; *Eugene Onegin* with Renée Fleming and Dmitri Hvorostovsky, conducted by Valery Gergiev, on February 24; the new production of *The Barber of Seville* with Juan Diego Flórez on March 24; and the new production of *Il Trittico*, conducted by Maestro Levine and directed by Jack O'Brien, on April 28.

The Met will partner with three different companies to bring these productions into movie theaters: **National CineMedia** (NCM, a venture of AMC Entertainment Inc., Cinemark USA, Inc. and Regal Entertainment Group) in the United States, **Cineplex Entertainment** in Canada, and **Odeon/UCI** in the U.K. and Europe. The Met is also in discussions with potential partners in Asia.

Following thirty-day windows, the productions will be presented on **PBS** by **Thirteen/WNET** in the United States, beginning in January 2007, and on different television systems in other countries. PBS is co-producing the six programs, which will be broadcast on its terrestrial stations as well as on its recently introduced high-definition service. "This is an important first step in expanding PBS' commitment to cultural programming and building on PBS' role as television's leader in the arts," said **Paula A. Kerger**, PBS president and CEO. "In partnership with the Metropolitan Opera and Thirteen/WNET, the leading producer of culture and arts programming for PBS, we're proud to introduce new audiences to these outstanding productions."

The Met will present live streaming of opera performances on its website with support from **RealNetworks®**, the leading creator of digital media services. In the coming months, Real will also make the Met's extensive library of radio archive broadcasts available through its award-winning **Rhapsody®** online music service. Streaming of Met operas is anticipated to begin with the start of the 2006-07 season.

The Met also plans to enter into agreements with other companies for the distribution of digital downloads, video on demand, digital radio, opera ring-tones, standard CDs and DVDs, and instant CDs that will be available following selected performances – all of which will now be possible with the new union agreements.

The Met's Saturday matinee radio broadcasts, heard over the **Toll Brothers-Metropolitan Opera International Radio Network**, will continue to be carried over a network of commercial and non-commercial radio stations globally; the 76th season runs from December 9 to May 5. The broadcasts are sponsored by Toll Brothers, America's luxury home builder™, with generous long-term support from the **Annenberg Foundation** and the **Vincent A. Stabile Foundation**.

Although the idea of transmitting operas live into movie theaters in the United States and abroad is extraordinary, the Met and its movie theater partners are relying on a grass-roots marketing approach to ensure its success. The plan calls for promotional efforts that will tap into the Met's passionately loyal radio audiences across the United States, Canada, and Europe, as well as with public television's opera fans in the United States. "Opera fans are as fanatical about opera as baseball fans are about baseball," said Mr. Gelb. "We want to make the Met as available electronically to its followers as the Yankees are to theirs."

Comments from the Met's Unions & Media Partners

David Lennon, president of Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians, said "Local 802 and the musicians of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra are pleased to have reached agreement on a groundbreaking media deal with the management of the Metropolitan Opera. The collaborative efforts of all parties involved have resulted in an agreement that will provide Met musicians with a significant guarantee of additional revenue, while allowing the Met, under the new leadership of General Manager Peter Gelb, to launch an ambitious new plan to revitalize the Metropolitan Opera through new and innovative media endeavors."

Alan S. Gordon, national executive director of the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA), the union that represents the Met's singers, dancers, and stage staff, said "This breakthrough agreement protects the future of the Met and its artists and is crafted to let the greatest number of people see and hear their music. It memorializes the on-going symbiotic relationship between the Met and AGMA's members as true partners in America's cultural heritage. By creating a cost-effective way of allowing the Met to utilize new technology, our members are making an investment in the future of operatic music, an investment that will benefit the institution, the artists, and the beauty that they create."

James Claffey, president of the Theatrical Stage Employees Union, Local One, IATSE, said, "Local One's recently renegotiated media agreement with the Metropolitan Opera clearly addresses the reality that the Met's success – with an easier approach to expanding its audience through

technology and otherwise – means success for all. Local One extends its support with the greatest hope of achievement.”

“We’re very pleased to bring this series of world-class performances live from the Met into local movie theaters across America. The unique, secure technology of our Digital Content Network will enable people to enjoy the Metropolitan Opera in an entirely new way,” said **Tom Galley**, chief operations and technology officer of National CineMedia. “The High-Definition quality, big screen and cinema surround sound in our theaters allows patrons to really become immersed in the experience, and also gives them the option to hear the opera live-via-satellite or to attend a pre-recorded ‘encore’ presentation following the premiere. It is a state-of-the art way to appreciate this classic form of entertainment.”

“Cineplex Entertainment is very pleased to partner with the Metropolitan Opera to bring this outstanding musical series to Canada,” said **Ellis Jacob**, president and CEO, Cineplex Entertainment. “The combination of the Met’s superb musical productions combined with our giant screens and Dolby Digital Surround Sound will make these events the next best thing to actually being there.”

Rupert Gavin, chief executive of Odeon/UCI, said, “We are delighted to be able to offer our audiences in the U.K. and around Europe operas from the New York Met live in high definition and in digital. We think that the quality of the performances, the live high-definition pictures, and the comfort of our cinemas will make this an ideal way to attract a new audience to the very best that the opera world has to offer.”

“Real’s relationship with the Metropolitan Opera underscores our commitment to offering products that enrich consumers’ digital music experiences,” said **Matt Rowlen**, VP, RealNetworks Inc. “Adding the Met’s historic performances to the Rhapsody library exposes an entirely new audience to these cherished recordings and makes our service more appealing to opera fans everywhere.”

About the Met’s Unions

The agreement marks a historic turning point in the relationship between live performance and media distribution. In the past, media activities have required substantial upfront payments to all parties involved in the performances, rendering flexible and wide-ranging plans effectively impossible. By agreeing upon a new revenue-sharing model that allows for expansive distribution rights, the Met and its unions signal a shift to a more fluid concept of media, in keeping with the infinite possibilities offered by modern technology.

Since December of 2005, Mr. Gelb and Joseph Volpe, the Met's former general manager, worked together to negotiate the new media agreements. Gelb revealed some of his hopes for the Met's new media initiatives at a press conference last February, while discussions were in progress. Regular labor contracts with Local 802 and AGMA, not including the media clauses, were settled with the Met in the spring of 2005; their contracts went into effect on August 1, 2006. The Local One contract was settled in September 2005 and went into effect retroactively on August 1, 2005.

About the Met's New Media Partners

National CineMedia, LLC is a venture of AMC Entertainment Inc., Cinemark USA, Inc. and Regal Entertainment Group (NYSE: RGC), three of the world's leading theatrical exhibition companies. The company develops pre-feature entertainment; cinema and lobby advertising products; comprehensive meeting and event services; and alternative forms of entertainment content for distribution across the approximately 13,000 screens operated by its owner theater circuits and other theater affiliates. Over 11,000 of these screens are part of NCM's Digital Content Network (DCN), one of the world's largest in-theater digital distribution networks. The network provides content and advertising to 150 U.S. markets, including 49 of the top 50, reaching an estimated 525 million movie patrons annually. For additional information, please go to www.ncm.com.

Cineplex Entertainment LP owns, leases, or has a joint venture interest in 132 theaters with 1,309 screens and is the largest motion picture exhibitor in Canada. Headquartered in Toronto, Canada, the Partnership operates theaters with the following six top-tier brands: Cineplex Odeon, Galaxy and Famous Players (including Coliseum, Colossus and SilverCity). Proudly Canadian, the units of Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund, which owns approximately 58.8% of Cineplex Entertainment LP, are traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange under Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund (symbol CGX.UN). More information can be found at www.cineplex.com.

Odeon/UCI is one of Europe's largest cinema operators, with sites in six territories. The company is a market leader in Britain, where it operates 810 screens at 110 sites across the country. Odeon accounts for almost one in three of all cinema tickets sold in the U.K. Odeon also holds a market-leading position in Spain and operates cinemas in Germany, Austria, Portugal, and Italy. The company is a major player in the development of digital cinema and has been very active in the use of digital technologies to screen alternative content programming such as music and sports events in its cinemas.

RealNetworks, Inc. is the leading creator of digital media services and software including Rhapsody®, RealPlayer® 10, and casual PC and mobile games. Broadcasters, network operators, media companies, and enterprises use RealNetworks' products and services to create and deliver digital media to PCs, mobile phones, and consumer electronics devices. Consumers can access and experience audio/video programming and download RealNetworks' consumer software at www.real.com. RealNetworks' systems and corporate information is located at www.realnetworks.com. RealNetworks and Rhapsody are registered trademarks of RealNetworks, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

PBS is a media enterprise that serves 354 public noncommercial television stations and reaches almost 90 million people each week through on-air and online content. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and arts and cultural entertainment, and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org websites on the Internet.

Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, *NOW With David Brancaccio*, and *Cyberchase* – as well as the work of Bill Moyers – to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as The Ethnic Heritage Specials, The Thirteen Walking Tours, New York Voices, and Reel New York. Thirteen extends the impact of its television productions through educational and community outreach projects - including the Celebration of Teaching and Learning - as well as web sites and other digital media platforms. More information can be found at: www.thirteen.org.

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