

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Townsend Opera puts office building up for sale, seeks to move locations

Townsend Opera announces that its Board of Directors has approved putting its current office building and rehearsal space, located at 605 H Street in downtown Modesto, up for sale. With increased maintenance costs, higher heating and cooling costs, a weak rental market for its rental spaces, increasing crime in the area, and smaller staffing needs, the current location no longer meets the day-to-day needs of the company.

The company will begin looking for commercial space in downtown Modesto for its business office, with plans to move once its current building is sold. The company already houses all of its costumes, props, and set construction at off-site warehouses, and will also begin looking for a location to hold rehearsals for its chorus, youth programs, and opera productions.

Matthew Buckman, Executive Director of Townsend Opera, said: “While there is a tremendous amount of our company’s history in this building, the costs of maintaining such a large space no longer match the benefits of having it. As our company has evolved over the years, our needs have changed, and this location is no longer the ideal place from which to operate the company. As for rehearsal space, we have several ideas that we discussed in preparing for this decision. Now that we have decided to move forward, we will begin to explore those ideas further.”

Steve Collins, President of the Board of Directors, said: “The building has become an unnecessary drain on company resources, both human and financial. The board no longer wants our employees dealing with landlord issues from the rental portions of the property, and maintaining such a large space for a smaller and more streamlined staff is no longer cost effective. Our costs far outweigh the use we get from this building.”

About Townsend Opera

Townsend Opera just concluded its 28th season of presenting opera and musical theater productions to the greater Modesto community and Stanislaus County. The company was founded in 1983 by Modesto native Eric Buck Townsend, a graduate of Modesto High School, who had a successful international career as an opera singer. In 1982, Buck returned to Modesto with the goal of bring opera to his home town. After organizing a first performance, they gathered a group of potential patrons at their home, and that group gathered funding for the company’s first season.

Buck Townsend worked tirelessly to lead the company for 25 years, often directing, conducting, or singing in performances, building sets, and organizing costumes. He was part of the group that led the charge to have a world-class performing arts venue in Modesto, and worked to make that a possibility for our community. After being diagnosed with cancer in 2007, Buck and then-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. Matthew Buckman became the company’s first Executive Director in February 2008, and work with Buck until his passing in September 2008 to establish a long-term strategic plan that has led to new artistic achievements for the company.

The opera has thrived artistically under the leadership of Ryan Murray, Principal Conductor since July 2008, Joseph Wiggett, Artistic Director since January 2009, and Jennifer Grover, Chorus master since July 2010. The company has dramatically increased its role in the community by establishing groundbreaking partnerships with the CSU Stanislaus Department of Music and the Modesto Junior College vocal division. Both colleges participate actively in the artistic activities of the company, expanding the company's mission of providing performance opportunities for the members of its community. A new artistic partnership with San Francisco Opera has given residents of Modesto and the surrounding region the unique opportunity to hear some of the best singers in the country in a live performance.

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