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For Immediate Release

**DREAMERS, DOERS & DEVILS: 2008/2009 OPERA SEASON ANNOUNCED,
NEW, LOWER SUBSCRIPTION PRICES**

A classic love story starring soprano Kallen Esperian ~ A revised work by famed African-American composer Scott Joplin ~ A tale of supernatural proportions

Memphis, TN – On January 26, 2008, General Director Michael Ching and Board President John Ryder announced the 2008-2009 Opera Memphis season. The season will run from October 25, 2008 through April 28, 2009. The productions will be Verdi's LA TRAVIATA starring Memphis favorite Kallen Esperian, SCOTT JOPLIN AND TREEMONISHA and Gounod's FAUST. Opening night of the season will also include an after-opera performance by interpretive folk singer Judy Collins presented in special partnership with the North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance.

Opera Memphis also announces new, lower subscription prices. See three operas for as low as \$39. "TRAVIATA, TREEMONISHA and FAUST will make a great introductory season," states Michael Ching, "and we want to make sure that price is no barrier."

Building New Audiences

Continuing the mission to entice new audiences, ArtsMemphis awarded Opera Memphis a \$50,000 Enhancement Grant to present SCOTT JOPLIN & TREEMONISHA. Born in Texas, Scott Joplin is best known for composing ragtime music most recognizably, *The Entertainer* and *Maple Leaf Rag*. TREEMONISHA is Joplin's only opera. Opera Memphis will present a new adaptation of the opera that frames the original 19th century story with Joplin's 20th century struggle to get TREEMONISHA produced in his lifetime.

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Opera Memphis General and Artistic Director Michael Ching continues his commitment to developing new audiences through Opera Memphis' local partnership and live broadcasts with WKNO-FM, local high-school participation in our song-writing workshops, Black Roots of Opera, Opera Memphis' partnership with the Negro Spiritual Song Competition, Arts Reaching Children and our Artist-in-Residence initiative.

Opening Night Festivities

After opening night of LA TRAVIATA, famed folksinger Judy Collins will take the Orpheum stage to sing some of the great hits from the 1960s. Collins has recorded songs by celebrated songwriters such as Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen, Randy Newman, Joan Baez and Pete Seeger.

In partnership with the North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance, tickets will be available for \$10 for anyone who purchases a season subscription by August 29, 2008. Tickets will be \$20 for any non-subscribers or patrons subscribing after the August 29th deadline.

Opera Memphis 2008-2009 Season

Verdi's LA TRAVIATA starring Kallen Esperian: October 25 & 28, 2008

Violetta is Paris' most sought after courtesan and party girl. Kept by some of the city's wealthiest men, Violetta falls madly in love with Alfredo. Alfredo's father demands Violetta leave him. He says that this relationship is scandalizing the family name. Heartbroken, Violetta complies and writes Alfredo a "Dear John" letter. This classic features the famous drinking song "Libiamo ne'lieti calici."

LA TRAVIATA is going to star Memphis based artist Kallen Esperian in the title role. William Joyner will play Alfredo Germont and former Ryan Opera Center (Lyric Opera of Chicago) artist Quinn Kelsey will make his Opera Memphis debut as Germont's father. Karen Tiller returns to direct.

SCOTT JOPLIN & TREEMONISHA: January 24 & 25, 2009

Set in Texarkana, Arkansas after the Civil War, TREEMONISHA is the tale of a young African-American girl who rejects the superstitions of her community. This adaptation will take the audience on a journey of the struggles Joplin faced in trying to get his opera produced in the early 20th century when ragtime was giving way to jazz.

Broadway and opera star Larry Marshall will direct SCOTT JOPLIN & TREEMONISHA. Artistic Director and resident composer Michael Ching will be adapting the work to better depict Joplin's struggle to get the opera produced during his lifetime. Anita Johnson will perform the role of Treemonisha. Conductor Rick Benjamin of the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra will make his Opera Memphis debut. SCOTT JOPLIN & TREEMONISHA has received an Enhancement Grant award from ArtsMemphis and will have partnerships with Rhodes College and the Greater Memphis Music Teachers Association.

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Gounod's FAUST: April 25 & 28, 2009

Faust sells his soul to the Devil to hang on to the pleasures of women and youth. This supernatural tale will take you on an adventure where good triumphs over evil. You won't want to miss this masterpiece featuring the famous Jewel Song and "Avant de quitter."

FAUST will feature the return of Metropolitan Opera tenor Adam Klein in the title role. Caroline Worra, who last appeared as Micaela in CARMEN, will perform the role of Marguerite. Rounding out the cast will be Darren Keith Stokes as Mephistopheles and Mark Walters as Valentin. Stokes is a former Opera Memphis Artist in residence and recent member of the Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ryan Opera Center. Directing the production will be Matthew Lata. Lata has directed at leading opera companies throughout North America. FAUST will be Lata's Opera Memphis debut.

Ticket Information

Season subscription prices range from \$39 to \$356. There are many benefits to becoming a subscriber. Subscribers receive a complimentary subscription to *Cadenza*, the Opera Memphis Newsletter, 10% off additional single ticket purchases, invitations to Opera Memphis Special Events, priority seat renewal and free replacement of lost or misplaced tickets. Subscriptions are on sale now. Single Tickets go on sale September 3, 2008. Tickets to the after-opera Judy Collins concert are on sale now and may be purchased by calling the Opera Memphis Box Office.

Opera Memphis Box Office:

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About Opera Memphis

Celebrating its 52nd year, Opera Memphis is the premier opera company in the Mid-South. As part of its mission, Opera Memphis strives to provide quality performances and continues to prove that opera can be relevant and enjoyable to new and often non-traditional audiences. For more information, call 901-257-3100 or visit www.operamemphis.org.

About The North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance

The North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance exists to foster and promote traditional, contemporary, and multicultural folk music and dance, and related performing arts in North America. The Folk Alliance seeks to strengthen and advance organizational and individual initiatives in folk music and dance through education, networking, advocacy, and professional and field development. More information can be found at www.folk.org.