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NEWS RELEASE

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Wichita Grand Opera Welcomes Home International Diva Joyce DiDonato

(WICHITA, KS – March 13, 2009) – “Wichita Grand Opera is proud to continue the tradition of bringing Kansas born superstars back home to Wichita,” said General Director Parvan Bakardiev. Through the generosity of the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation, for the last two seasons, WGO audiences were enthralled with Colby, Kansas native and Wichita State Alumnus Samuel Ramey. This season, the foundation has provided artist underwriting for another Kansas native - international superstar Joyce DiDonato. Ms. DiDonato will light up the Wichita stage, starring in her signature role



The incomparable Joyce DiDonato stars in the WGO new production of Rossini's Barber of Seville, April 25th and 26th.

of Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* on April 25th and 26th. “We were pleased to have given Samuel Ramey his professional debut in his home state, and we are equally pleased to give Joyce DiDonato the same opportunity. This is once again a major coup for Wichita as we continue to present the biggest and the best for our audiences.”

It has been said that you can take Ms. DiDonato out of Kansas, but you cannot take Kansas out of the star. She grew up as the sixth of seven siblings in a close-knit Irish-American family in Prairie Village, KS, a small satellite city of Kansas City. Originally interested in pop and Broadway music, Joyce found her true calling as a junior at Wichita State University when she discovered opera. The opera world was blessed that day with an amazing talent that has continued to develop into one of the signature faces of the art form. Once she graduated, her interest in opera grew as she continued her training at the renowned Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia.

During her graduate studies at the Academy of Performing Arts, she had the honor of participating in some of the country's greatest young artist programs. She became the Outstanding Apprentice Artist in 1995 during her participation in Santa Fe Opera's Young Artist program. From 1996-1998, Ms. DiDonato participated in the Young Artist Program at Houston Grand Opera, and she participated in the prestigious Merola Program with the San Francisco Opera in 1997.

From that point on, Joyce DiDonato's star was rapidly on the rise, claiming her place as one of

the most compelling and committed performing artists of her generation with a depth of interpretive smarts that range from “playful eroticism to imploding self-delusion to near-catatonic depression.” This range has allowed her career to skyrocket, performing major roles all throughout the world’s greatest opera houses, including La Scala, Royal Opera at Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Paris Opera, Tokyo Opera, and Geneva among others, in addition to many worldwide Metropolitan Opera Broadcasts. Ms. DiDonato is also an accomplished recording artist with some of the world’s greatest recording labels, including Deutsche Grammophon.

Whether she is performing some of the greatest roles from the demanding coloratura roles of Rossini, Mozart and Handel, working on a high-profile debut production, or performing in concert with a world famous symphony orchestra, Ms. DiDonato always focuses on viewing the score with fresh eyes, interpreting the role in a new way. When she was asked about Rosina, her signature role which she has performed more than 60 times across the globe, Ms. DiDonato said, “My biggest priority when I come back to Rosina is to devour the score from a fresh perspective, note by note, as if it were my first time singing it, and to be certain I know Rossini’s original intentions. After a number of performances, it’s easy to think of your ornaments as the original notes!”

Throughout her prestigious career, Joyce DiDonato has distinguished herself as an international superstar by winning some of the opera world’s most respected awards and honors. In 2007, she won the Beverly Sills award for Opera Excellence, given by the Metropolitan Opera. In addition, she received the prestigious Richard Tucker Award in 2002 and was bestowed with an ARIA award in 2000.

But no matter how far her career builds, it is the Kansas roots that continue to be her driving force. This is evident when asked about “Divahood.” She replied “It feels as if the original term has been hijacked—I wonder if it actually means anything anymore. But a diva is supposed to be somebody who, while managing to be true to the composer, moves the audience to extraordinary heights.”

Joyce DiDonato will star as Rosina in the Wichita Grand Opera’s new production of Rossini’s hilarious masterpiece, *The Barber of Seville* on April 25 and 26, 2009. Opera newcomers and buffs enjoy this tale of the enamored young Count, Almaviva, who with assistance from the town’s mischievous barber, Figaro, woos the beautiful Rosina right under the nose of her guardian, Dr. Bartolo. Starring opposite Ms. DiDonato is impeccable Italian bass **Stefano de Peppo** as Dr. Bartolo; rising star **William Browning** in the title role of Figaro; charismatic tenor **Patrick Greene** as Count Almaviva; and amazing WGO Young Artist Scott Conner as Don Basilio.

Honoring the life and career of Joyce DiDonato and the achievements of the Wichita Grand Opera, the Wichita Grand Opera is planning an end of season social event, “A Date With The Diva.” It will be take place on April 18th at the Flint Hills National Golf Club. For more information, call 316-683-3444.

Tickets for *The Barber of Seville* are available through the WGO Box Office at 316.262.8054 or visit www.selectaseat.com. For more information, visit **WGO’s website**; www.WichitaGrandOpera.org.

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Artist underwriting provided by



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