



**NEWS RELEASE  
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**FORT WORTH OPERA GENERAL DIRECTOR AFTON BATTLE APPOINTED TO THE BOARD OF OPERA AMERICA AND ELECTED TO SERVE AS COUNCIL CO-CHAIR OF THE MEMBERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, FOLLOWING FIRST YEAR LEADING FORT WORTH OPERA**

**THE FORT WORTH OPERA BOARD OF TRUSTEES ANNOUNCES UNANIMOUS ELECTION OF RYAN KRAUSE, PH.D. AS NEW CHAIR, AND WELCOMES FIVE DIVERSE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS, KEON ANDERSON, D.D.S., ASHLEY LACAMP, KATHERINE HERNANDEZ POLENZ, EBONY R. ROSE, AND HAYNE SHUMATE AS NEW BOARD MEMBERS**

**NICOLE DUVALL AND BARBARA JORDAN ELECTED AS CO-VICE CHAIR. DUVALL IS THE NEWLY ELECTED BOARD SECRETARY, WHILE JORDAN MAINTAINS POSITION AS THE TREASURER**

**FORT WORTH, TX — Fort Worth Opera (FWO) is proud to announce that General Director Afton Battle has been appointed to the Board of OPERA America, the national advocate and service organization for opera, and elected to serve as Council Co-Chair of the Membership and Development Council.** The company is also pleased to announce that **Ryan Krause, Ph.D.**, has been unanimously elected as the incoming Chair of the Board of Trustees, and welcomes **Keon Anderson, D.D.S., Ashley Lacamp, Katherine Hernandez Polenz, Ebony R. Rose, and Hayne Shumate** as new Board members. **Nicole Duvall** has been elected Secretary, and **Barbara Jordan** returns as Treasurer for the 2021-2022 Season. Additionally, they have been elected to serve as Co-Vice Chair, bringing with them decades of invaluable business, communications, and management experience, along with a deep commitment to bringing Fort Worth Opera out in the community and into schools throughout North Texas.

After eight years of board service to date, and seven months as Acting General Director for the company in 2020, **Nelson Claytor, Ph.D.**, is completing his two-year term as Chair of the Board of Trustees. Fort Worth Opera recognizes Dr. Claytor's dynamic leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, and his outstanding service and commitment to Fort Worth Opera's financial and artistic health during his tenure. He will continue to serve on the Board as the company prepares to celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season this fall.

"I am honored to have had the opportunity to serve Fort Worth Opera as Chair for the past two years," says Dr. Claytor. "The past 18 months have been extraordinarily difficult for opera and the performing arts, but Fort Worth Opera has weathered the storm, and I cannot wait for our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season to begin. We are exceptionally fortunate to have Afton Battle as our General Director; her focus on engaging the entire Fort Worth community through the beauty and power of the voice has led to a remarkable and vibrant plan for our 75<sup>th</sup> year.

"I am thrilled that Ms. Battle has been selected to serve the international opera community and represent Fort Worth Opera on the Board of Opera America and as Council Co-Chair of Opera America's Membership and Development Council. I am also extremely pleased that Dr. Ryan Krause will succeed me as Chair this fall. His exemplary leadership of Fort Worth Opera's General Director Search and Governance Committees, along with Ms. Battle's inspiring leadership of our amazing staff, gives me great confidence that the future of Fort Worth Opera is in the best of hands."

The **OPERA America Board of Directors** is composed of field leaders from across the industry and functions as an "action-oriented think tank," assisting the OA staff in developing a comprehensive understanding of salient issues in the field and design responsive programs and services to sustain opera's continued vibrancy. The Membership Council engages in

regular analysis of member engagement in the association's work to ensure that programs and services are shared widely by companies of all sizes, by trustees who govern these companies, and by the creative and performing artists who bring the art form to life. Afton Battle joins the OPERA America Board of Directors and Membership Council less than a year after being appointed General Director of Fort Worth Opera.

An FWO Board member since January of 2020, **Ryan Krause, Ph.D.** has served as the Chair of the Governance and General Director Search Committees, working closely with Dr. Claytor, Afton Battle, board and staff leadership as the company has navigated through the ongoing pandemic. His election as Chair of the Board of Trustees arrives on the heels of Fort Worth Opera's recent Diamond Anniversary season announcement, which includes a long-awaited transition from the festival model to year-round programming. Dr. Krause is Associate Professor of Strategy and Schumacher Faculty Fellow at the Neeley School of Business at Texas Christian University. He holds a Ph.D. in Strategic Management and Organization Theory, and a B.S. in Finance and Public Policy Analysis from Indiana University's Kelley School of Business and is the 2020 recipient of the elite Emerging Scholar Award from the Strategic Management Society. Dr. Krause is an internationally recognized expert in corporate governance, having published 28 peer-reviewed articles in top academic journals. His research has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Harvard Business Review*, NBC National News, and Fox Business Network.

"I am honored and humbled to be stepping into the role of Board Chair as we return to theaters with our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season," says Dr. Krause. "We are so unbelievably fortunate to have Afton Battle leading our company at this time, and I am truly excited to be able to work with her to continue rebuilding and strengthening FWO. Afton is a true visionary, and I share her ambition of making opera accessible to all the people of Fort Worth and the surrounding areas. She intends to make Fort Worth Opera "The People's Company," and I intend to do anything I can to help her make that vision a reality. I also want to express my sincere appreciation to Nelson Claytor for his tireless efforts as Board Chair—and for a while as Acting General Director—during one of the most difficult moments in the history of the operatic artform. Nelson's commitment and dedication to FWO are an inspiration to me as I step into this role."

Establishing a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion starts from the top down. As Fort Worth Opera continues to dedicate its creative resources to breaking down barriers and introducing new audiences to this art form, the Board of Trustees must reflect, understand, and prioritize the needs of the entire community in which it serves. As the company celebrates over seven decades of performances in 2021 and brings opera into schools and neighborhoods across Tarrant County, FWO focuses not on what has been but what could and will be. This vibrant cohort of diverse young professionals under fifty offers a wide spectrum of invaluable skills, expertise, and experience. Not only will they bring a fresh perspective to the table, but there will be broader BIPOC representation on the Fort Worth Opera Board of Trustees in such a manner that has not existed in over two decades.

During this pivotal moment in FWO history, as the company expands its presence and visibility throughout North Texas, the organization welcomes five new members to the Board.

**Keon Anderson, D.D.S.**, is the Correctional Health Dentist for Acclaim Physician Group with a successful track record of fundraising. A nonprofit leader with over a decade of serving underrepresented communities, he provides access to basic needs and reinvests in the community through job training. Dr. Anderson currently serves on the Board of the United Way of Tarrant County, the Delta Mu Boulé Educational Foundation, and the LSU Alumni Association as the Scholarship Chairman. In addition, he is affiliated with the American Dental Association, the Student National Dental Association, and the Texas Dental Association. Dr. Anderson holds a Doctorate of Dental Surgery from Texas A&M University, Baylor College of Dentistry, and a Bachelor of Science from Louisiana State University.

**Ashley Lacamp** is a Financial Advisor with Morgan Stanley. A former Wealth Planning Associate at UBS Financial Services, and Wealth Advisor Associate with Morgan Stanley, she is also a professional model at Kim Dawson Agency. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Great Plains Restoration Council and El Tesoro Foundation and is the Treasurer for Project 4031's Board of Directors. Ms. Lacamp holds a Bachelor of Business Economics from the University of North Texas and has Financial Services Licenses Series 7 and 66, is a Life and Health Insurance Agent, is BoardBuild Certified, and is a Certified Financial Planner®.

Head of Marketing and Public Relations at the Kimbell Art Museum, **Katherine Hernandez Polenz** is a seasoned creative and strategic problem solver with more than fifteen years of marketing and brand development experience in visual arts, performing arts, and higher education. Prior to her role at the Kimbell, Ms. Polenz was the Director of Marketing for Texas Christian University, a Marketing Associate at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Marketing & Communications Associate at Atlanta Ballet, and the Marketing & Communication Assistant at Opera Carolina. She received a Master of Arts in Arts Administration from the Savannah College of Art & Design and a Bachelor of Arts in English from Davidson College. Ms. Polenz serves on the Art Collection Advisory Committee at Davidson College and is a former board member for Mental Health America of Greater Tarrant County.

**Ebony R. Rose** is a Senior Learning & Development Consultant, an adjunct faculty member, and former Director of Student Organizations for Texas Christian University. As a Cornell ILR Certified Diversity & Inclusion Professional (CCDP) Ms. Rose has over fifteen years of community development, teaching, and facilitation experience focusing on talent development and strategic planning that supports diversity, equity, access, and inclusion initiatives. Ms. Rose received her Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in African-American Cultural Studies, Cinema & Media Studies from New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study and a Bachelor of Arts from Southwestern University. A graduate of Leadership Fort Worth's Leading Edge program and Steer Fort Worth's Keyholders program, she is the Board President of the Tarrant Literacy Coalition and served on the Access & Equity Advisory Committee for the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC). Ms. Rose also serves on the Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee of Alpha Delta Pi Sorority and was appointed by Mayor Price to the Community Development Council of the City of Fort Worth where she currently serves as Vice Chair.

Senior Vice President for Mouser Electronics, Inc, **Hayne Shumate** is responsible for global e-commerce strategy, execution, and sales for the Berkshire Hathaway Company. Manager of a multi-million-dollar budget and international staff of 175 developers, project managers, analysts, engineers, and systems architects, he shares responsibility for a \$1 billion-plus online sales budget with the SVP of Global Service. Over the years, Mr. Shumate has held e-commerce leadership roles with the Zale Corporation, Becket Media, and other Electronic Component Distributors and held corporate management and classroom roles at Teach for America. He received his MBA from the University of Texas at Arlington and his BA from the University of Texas at Austin. Mr. Shumate currently serves as a Board Member with Leadership Fort Worth, is the Chair and Corporate Advisory Council Member of the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department Heads Association (ECEDHA), and an Industry Advisory Board Member for the TCU Computer Science Department.

**About Fort Worth Opera:** Founded in 1946, Fort Worth Opera is poised to celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary season. After fourteen years of producing a nationally recognized Festival in the springtime, the organization returns to a year-round format in the fall of 2021. FWO has become one of the leading American companies dedicated to nurturing and performing new opera, while producing traditional repertoire with rising stars. The company's acclaimed Children's Opera Theatre program serves around 60,000 students across North Texas each season with live, interactive performances. Fort Worth Opera is committed to celebrating all North Texans, and through our ongoing *Noches de Ópera* program and concerts like *A Night of Black Excellence*, the company offers community-driven events and powerful operas that represent the diverse cultures of all of the Americas.

Fort Worth Opera is sponsored in part by awards from The Arts Council of Fort Worth & Tarrant County, The City of Fort Worth, the Texas Commission on the Arts, Virginia Hobbs Charitable Trust, Simmons Bank, Trustee, Visit Fort Worth, and OPERA America. Additional Fort Worth Opera sponsors include: Tarrant Country Pearls Chapter of The Society, Inc., Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce, Texas Christian University, Time to Heal America, Allan Virgo, Royal Flesh, Townplace Suites Marriott, Renaissance: The Worthington Hotel. Additional sponsors include Haltom's Fine Jewelers, UNT Health Science Center, the Kimbell Art Museum, Col. William A. Massad, Ret., Trewbarry, Farmers Insurance, Larry Kardaras, and The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.

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