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A Conversation with newly appointed Kimmel Center President AND CEO Anne Ewers and Kimmel Center Director of Communications Paul Marotta

July 6, 2007

On May 15, 2007, the Kimmel Center announced the appointment of Anne Ewers as its new president and chief executive officer, effective July 9, 2007. Previously Ms. Ewers was the president and chief executive officer of Utah Symphony & Opera. Ms. Ewers' many accomplishments included doubling the Utah Symphony & Opera's endowment, turning the combined organizations' deficit into a surplus, netting the first recording contract for the symphony in 15 years, producing the symphony's first European tour in 19 years and launching a major summer performing arts festival.

By Monday, May 28, Memorial Day, Ms. Ewers had just finished two days of house hunting in Philadelphia, and committed to buying a house! Kimmel Center's Director of Communications Paul Marotta sat down with Ms. Ewers on that Monday in an effort to capture some of that energy and enthusiasm as she was clearly eager to get to work in Philly!

Q: How long were you at the Utah Symphony & Opera?

A: I arrived in the spring of 1991. I was hired as a General Director, which in the opera world means both administrative and artistic roles, and served Utah Opera for 11 years. Then, the Utah Symphony and Utah Opera merged in 2002. The vote to approve the merger occurred on July 8, 2002, so I have been running Utah Symphony & Opera since that time as its first President and CEO.

Q: What accomplishments are you most proud of there?

A: Interesting question and hard to answer. Let's see: At the Opera, increasing the number of productions from three to four each year, and especially the world premiere commission, development and production of *Dreamkeepers* in 1996 to celebrate the centennial of the state of Utah. Interestingly enough it was the only aspect of that statewide celebration which focused on the state's indigenous peoples. Virtually everything else around that celebration focused on the pioneers. We were the only entity in the state to celebrate the Ute tribe. As an interesting side note, I still maintain a wonderful collegueship with one of the members of the Ute tribe.

We spent four years working on that project, making sure that everything was absolutely accurate and respectful of the tribe. To this day one of the tribal members still comes to the Wednesday night performances throughout the season, which is a 3 1/2 hour drive from the reservation to the theatre. When he heard I was leaving he brought me a long braid of sweet grass as his congratulatory gift. In case I have or run into trouble here I can burn a bit of it to help me overcome any obstacles. I've also done a couple of sweats with members of the Ute tribe, and believe me Ute sweats are the hottest!

The most recent world premiere commission, development and co-production—*The Grapes of Wrath*—has been extremely important and has been garnering national recognition. The establishment of the Young Artists Program, which is now called the *Ensemble Artist Program*, has been extremely successful. We started with singers who did small roles on the main stage and it has now become a two-tiered program consisting of five singers who were with us for 10 months out of the year and travel and perform in virtually every single school in the state of Utah, K-12, over a three year cycle. Together, with the program we did for orchestra outreach, we touched nearly 200,000 children per year. The work that we also did with the visually impaired and the hearing impaired, children at risk, battered women and children with autism, allowed us to touch the community in very significant ways.

And certainly the merger was an enormous undertaking, yet successful for us. It was unprecedented for organizations of that size in the arts. It was not without its heart aches of course but I think certainly one or the other of the two organizations would have gone into receivership had it not been for the merger. With the downturn in the performing arts market after 9/11, certainly many organizations across the country were in trouble. That merger allowed us to save more than \$1 million annually. Certainly being able to fund raise for one entity instead of two put us in a more advantageous position, as well as being able to combine marketing efforts.

The creation of the Deer Valley Music Festival was certainly critically needed. If an orchestra is going to have a 52-week season it is terrifically important to have something meaningful for the orchestra members to do during the summer months, and to secure a revenue stream for that time period as well. In the third year of existence the Deer Valley Music Festival contributed \$1.9million to the bottom line. It created a scenario where we had three distinct product lines: Orchestra, 50 percent; Opera, 25 percent; and Deer Valley Music Festival, 25 percent. The five-year plan for the festival is that ultimately it will contribute \$3 million back to the bottom-line of the institution.

Q: How is this enormous outreach and education program funded?

A: Approximately 35 percent of that is government funded and the rest we had to fund raise. We spent approximately \$3 million per year just on education with a total budget of \$17.5 million. Incidentally, San Francisco Opera, which has a \$60 million budget, spends approximately 2 million per year on outreach and education and reaches approximately 60,000 children. Education to my mind is critically important and is one of the things I want to focus on here in Philadelphia at the Kimmel Center.

Q: Is it difficult for you to leave that rich artistic culture and climate?

A: I was in Boston for nine years prior to my Salt Lake City tenure so I truly miss the East Coast. The historical aspect of the East Coast has always been very special to me. Walking around Philly today looking at houses I completely fell in love with Philadelphia. I do feel I was born in the wrong era. When I see these wonderful homes I do wish I had been able to live in them during that time. Every summer growing up my Dad would take us to a different part of the country so that we would learn about our United States. In fact we came to Philadelphia when I was very young and did all the tourist things that one does including visiting Liberty Bell. I think my "love affair" with Philly began way back then.

Q: What was your biggest challenge in Utah?

A: Certainly the biggest challenge had to have been the merger and yet it was the most satisfying thing administratively that I had done in my career to that point. There were donors who took a wait-and-see attitude, and there were many who were vehemently opposed to what we were trying to accomplish. Yet every year little by little we saw people and contributions coming back to Utah Symphony & Opera. We averted the possibility of an orchestra strike in 2004 and going into the next round of negotiations in 2007, I felt confident that we had built a strong working relationship between the orchestra members and administration. I did a series of "fireside chats" with just the orchestra members and me—I bought pizza for everyone and we sat around and talked in a very open way about their questions and concerns. I came with answers to questions from the previous session as well as shared my issues and concerns.

Q: Will you miss that orchestra environment?

A: Well certainly, but the intriguing thing for me at the Kimmel Center is just how close I will be able to be to the art that takes place in our venues. When a look at the career path of my life, I went from singer to stage director and designer dealing with sets and costumes and lights, to producer and now to presenter. I have never looked back at a portion of my life and thought "oh I wish I was still doing..." The fact that I can now touch a broad spectrum of the performing arts here at the Kimmel Center is what's so thrilling about this new job for me, both personally and professionally.

To have an impact on an entire region and an impact on the entire presenting facilities industry because we are new enough and vibrant enough to do that – now that's exciting!



Anne Ewers

Q: Did you go to all the performances in Utah and can see yourself doing that here at the Kimmel Center?

A: Yes in fact I did go to every single Opera performance because that's where I could connect with the donors and patrons. I greeted people at the door when they came to performances and I bid farewell as they departed. I would love to be able to do that here as well. And I used to go to at least one of the two pairs of orchestra concerts each weekend, as well as at least one of the Pops pairs, and all of the chamber performances. Oh and it was always fun for me to attend *Lollipops* performances for the tiny ones, as well as the Discovery concerts which are for eight-year-olds and up. And for the Deer Valley Music Festival, with activities six days a week for an entire month, I would go to every single one of those events. The important element of all of that for me is that people respond to people. The most important issue for me is how can you do your job in this industry if you're not seeing what you're presenting?

Q: What do you feel you bring to this position here at the Kimmel Center?

A: Certainly my ability to fund raise is an important piece to bring to Philadelphia as this is an critical moment in time for the Kimmel Center. I have actually done fundraising in Philadelphia for Utah. I would also add my ability to fund raise at a national level, which is something I've had to do in Utah. I started national fundraising in 1995 or 1996 and since that time I have raised over \$8 million on a national level alone for Utah. Just this past year my out-of-state fundraising garnered \$1.2 million.

I think too, my background and experience in the production side of the music business gives me a unique advantage and an ability to work with everyone here. Each member of the Kimmel Center staff has such great expertise in the presenting side of our business – we'll make a good team. And I think too that my producing expertise will help my relationships with the Kimmel Center's eight resident companies.

Q: The Kimmel Center is still a relatively new performing arts center, a young institution, what will you do to help it mature and move forward?

A: First of all I think it's extraordinary what has happened in the first five years of the Kimmel Center. As a society, we are so busy tripping over the daily demands of our jobs that we can often lose sight of just how much has been accomplished here. I think it is important as the institution is maturing to:

- find ways of doing things more efficiently
- discover which things generate the best returns
- determine what is the best possible structure,
- further engage an involved and already committed board
- figure out how best to fundraise
- address all aspects of the institution

Let me clarify that I don't mean to micro-manage, rather to oversee and lead the institution forward.

We have passed through two extremely important stages: construction and startup. We are now ready to take a leap forward. I do think that the Kimmel Center is definitely poised for the next stage of evolution in its lifecycle.

Q: The Kimmel Center has had its share of ups and downs in the first five years. How will you address some of these lingering issues such as sprinklers, acoustics, budget concerns and endowment needs?

A: I certainly think being transparent is an important part of conquering those issues. People need to know where we are in terms of overcoming those problems, where solutions might be and quite simply having an honest understanding of what the struggles are. It is equally important to help people see the opportunity ahead of us rather than simply the challenge or crisis.

Q: Lincoln Center's Redevelopment is in essence a \$1 billion deferred maintenance bill. How do you plan to address capital improvements at the Kimmel Center?

A: I think it's critical and I think how that occurs needs to be done in tandem and in conversation with the full Kimmel Center staff and board to make sure we are all the same page. Certainly fundraising to maintain the facility is going to be one of my high priorities.

Q: What about fundraising in Philadelphia?

A: I think that there is so much potential here in Philadelphia, I'm eager to meet people and to build those relationships. I'm eager to help people understand that what the Kimmel Center is doing is vital to the arts organizations that we serve. Providing long-term stability and security for the resident companies through maintaining the Kimmel Center in itself is a terribly important priority. If we didn't do that each resident would have to shoulder that responsibility themselves and I know that is neither their desire nor within their capacity. Certainly when funders support and sustain the Kimmel Center it impacts our entire region.

Q: How would you like the Kimmel Center to relate to its community? What will you do to help the Kimmel Center become more integrated into the community?

A: I have lots of ideas and thoughts on this but I think it is critically important for me to spend substantial time with the staff and the board to hear their ideas and thoughts as to where both the challenges and the solutions lie. Whatever we choose to do, it's going to be necessary for us to reassert our relevance to the community. It is so important for the Kimmel Center to become a destination for the entire Philadelphia region and frankly beyond that, extending throughout the country and even internationally as well.

Q: Last year Kimmel Center presentations and its resident companies plus facility sales rentals department brought approximately one million people to the Kimmel Center and the Academy of Music.

A: I think that's wonderful and I believe that when the political and business leaders of this region fully understand what that means, it will have meaningful impact. Often the arts and their position as an economic engine for a region are not fully understood or recognized. We are serving a lot of people and it's fantastic to think that in the first five years we have arrived at this point.

Q: Have you met the heads of the resident companies at the Kimmel Center? What do you do to strengthen those relationships?

A: I have met several of them and others I have known for a long time. Away on tour at the time, Jim Undercofler left me a wonderful congratulations message when we made the announcement. I think it is important for everyone to realize that we are going to work together to develop our collaborative partnerships. The detail of what that means is going to take many meetings among the resident companies and between both the staff and the board to understand how we can best work together.

Q: Have you met the Kimmel Center Board of Directors and staff yet?

A: I have met board members who are on the search committee and several others along with virtually the entire Kimmel Center staff on the day we made the public announcement. I was so thrilled to have had the chance to begin the process of building a working relationship with each and every individual. Everyone was so warm and so welcoming I was just thrilled, I felt so embraced.

Q: The Kimmel Center Cadillac Broadway series has been extremely strong in recent years and the Kimmel Center Presents series has been extremely diverse in its offerings with classical, world, pop, jazz and dance performances. What are your thoughts about these two main performance strands?

A: Philadelphia, being a major East Coast market, gets the "first string performers" both for its Kimmel Center Presents Series and its Cadillac Broadway series and that is just a delight. But more importantly both of those combined with the other world class performances by the resident companies, go a long way toward making Philadelphia a true "destination" for the East Coast. Kimmel Center Presents as a mission driven performance series is terrifically important in validating who we are and what we do. And the Cadillac Broadway series is financially important to the institution with its audience draw and the economic impact it brings to

the region with shows like Disney's THE LION KING and *Wicked* and Monty Python's *Spamalot*. And certainly artistically a show like *The Color Purple* is going to be vitally important to Philadelphia audiences.

Q: The Kimmel Center education program has expanded this past year thanks to a major endowment grant from PNC Grow Up Great. What are your thoughts on education and the arts?

A: When I was here for the announcement press conference last month, among the many things I did on that day was to attend the dance in the schools program in Perelman Theater. I was ecstatic to see just how proud and engaged the parents were as they watched their children performing on stage. These kids were discovering in themselves their own artistic abilities and that is exactly what the arts are about. And how many of them have never been on a stage in their entire lives? Those are the experiences which make me say "this is why we are in the arts." So much has been done in this arena already. We are reaching 14,000 every year but we can do more.

Q: The economic impact of the Kimmel Center and the arts in general in Philadelphia has been much talked about in the media lately. In the first five years of operation the economic impact of the Kimmel center on the region has been approximately \$407 million. What are your thoughts on this?

A: Frankly I think every community needs to acknowledge the economic impact of the arts. Between what it drives to restaurants, hotels, shopping opportunities AND parking, not to mention the number of people employed directly/indirectly who then pay their taxes in this region. The arts are an important draw for new business development and an attraction for employee re-location.

I have read both Peggy Amsterdam's Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance economic impact study, *Portfolio*, as well as the recent Rand Economic Impact Study, and though it seems like we're stating the obvious when we say things like "Arts and cultural organizations are significant economic assets to the Philadelphia region" and "As the nation's fourth largest metropolitan area, Philadelphia contains a large and diverse mix of entertainment and recreation options" it does need to be said because it validates the existence of organizations like the Kimmel Center. It's what motivates someone like Carl Dranoff to make significant financial real estate investments such as Symphony House on the Avenue of the Arts.

Q: Much national media coverage has recently been given to the Kimmel Center around its May 2006 Organ Festival. Have you seen this coverage?

A: The world is paying attention; it is looking both at the Kimmel Center and at what we do in Philadelphia as well. Philadelphia is both on the map and on the radar and we need to develop that positioning. Philadelphia and the Kimmel Center are an important destination both regionally and nationally.

Q: The Kimmel center staff, especially Natalye Paquin who has in essence been holding down two jobs, has been doing a terrific job during this transition period.

A: Absolutely! I'm so impressed with both the entire staff and in particular with what Natalye has done. She has enabled the institution to continue for nine months without missing a step. I love how she thinks, she is extremely passionate about this job, and she is so eager to get back to what she was originally hired to do. We make a terrific team with what Natalye brings to the institution from the "large business" side of what we do, paired with my knowledge of the industry and the artistic side of the equation. Combine that with how we are uniquely positioned right now and I think we can accomplish so much more.

Q: What about other personal interests?

A: The house I just bought here in Philadelphia allows me to garden both on the lower patio and on the upper deck. Gardening is a terrific passion of mine, especially flowers. And hiking, I love to hike and will certainly miss that part of Utah, but I know Pennsylvania offers a lot of opportunities for hiking in the countryside. Oh, and we must not forget photography. As a stage director I learned the "art of composition" which is a natural component of photography. I don't necessarily focus on the technical aspect of photography but on the sheer creative side. I haven't made the transition yet to digital because I love film. I enjoy photographing nature, architecture and people. I love taking close-ups of my family – brothers, sisters and their kids and grandchildren. Oh and flowers... I think it's the combination of flowers and light that I find so appealing. With my sister living in New Zealand, I have some great photographs of those trips which I will undoubtedly hang in my office.

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KIMMEL CENTER, INC.
260 South Broad Street on the Avenue of the Arts | Suite 901
Philadelphia, PA 19102
phone 215-790-5800 | tickets 215-893-1999 | fax 215-790-5801
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