



OCONEE PERFORMING ARTS SOCIETY

PRESS RELEASE

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Jeffrey Wells joins OPAS **From the Metropolitan Opera in New York**

Over the past year, the OPAS Board and staff have worked hard to improve every operating facet of OPAS: programming, marketing, production, membership relations, financial management, and educational outreach. OPAS has been aided by numerous volunteers and supported by generous donations of funds and services by many local businesses and professional organizations.

OPAS has announced an exciting new initiative – the “**Artist in Residence**” program. The primary aim of this program is to bring an exciting performing arts professional to the Lake Oconee area as a full-time resident for a period of time to share his/her passion and talent for music with this community. The Artist in Residence will also bring a wealth of knowledge and relationships to enable OPAS to reach even higher levels of programming of events for their next season.

Their first appointment as Artist in Residence is **Jeffrey Wells**, a professional opera singer who is currently performing at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City and will be returning to the Met in December to perform in the next season’s productions. Jeffrey is no stranger to this area. He performed in Fa-la-la in 2008, an OPAS event at The Ritz- Carlton Lodge, and has been a visitor to this area on several occasions.

Mr. Wells is excited about returning to Georgia’s Lake Country and the following is a letter he has written to the residents and visitors of the Lake Oconee area.

Dear OPAS Members and Friends of the Arts,

I am most pleased and honored to have been selected as “Artist in Residence” this year by the Oconee Performing Arts Society. During my time with you, I hope to share the deep love and passion for the performing arts that I have developed during my 30 plus years in the business. My goal will be to get to know you and learn of your individual interests in the arts. I hope to significantly contribute to the further development of OPAS as a

leading presenter of high quality performing arts programs in the Lake Oconee area.

As I sit here looking out over the skyline of New York City, just blocks away from Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, I remember back to my youth at age 19 when all I could do was dream about singing at the Metropolitan Opera House and Carnegie Hall. Through a great deal of work, sacrifice and perseverance along with my deep passion for music and the arts, I have now surpassed 430 performances with the Metropolitan Opera as well as a plethora of operas and concerts at Carnegie Hall and other venues across the world. I have had the incredible pleasure of singing in over 14 countries and singing operas in seven languages.

As I share my talent and love for music and the arts over these next seven months, I hope to work closely with you to use the cohesive power of music to make this beautiful lake area an even better place to live. In addition, I will be working closely with the OPAS Board to use my experience and professional contacts in a variety of performing arts genres to bring the best of arts programming for the 2011-2012 OPAS season.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of your lives. Together, I believe we can do great things. - Jeffrey Wells

OPAS hopes you will help them in welcoming Mr. Wells to our community. "We are excited about our Artist in Residence program. OPAS remains, in spite of the significant consequences of the downturn in the economy and the loss of our founder, a strong, sustainable organization with a bright future" said Gene Elzy, OPAS Board Chairman.

The next show on the OPAS schedule is this month on Saturday, April 30th. OPAS will present Louise Pitre, star of *Mamma Mia!* on Broadway and *Les Misérables* in Paris, at Festival Hall in downtown Greensboro. The show, *An Evening in Paris, A Night in New York*, will take you on an intimate journey through story and song. For more information on this show and other upcoming events, please visit the website at www.opas.org.