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For Immediate Release:

OPERA HOUSE ANNOUNCES EXECUTIVE SEARCH

After one of the most successful summer seasons in its 23-year history, Opera House Arts (OHA) has announced the search for a permanent Executive Director for the non-profit organization. Deer Isle resident Pamela Dewell was appointed to a one-year term as Interim Director this past March. Dewell and OHA's new Artistic Director, Kathryn Markey, pulled together a summer season that generated multiple all-time "bests" – a successful fundraising Gala, the most highly attended Jazz Festival in 23 years, its biggest Broadway concert and movie audiences ever, and the largest live theater patronage in over a decade. *Almost, Maine*, directed by Markey, became the second highest grossing mainstage play in Opera House Arts' history.

"It's been a pleasure to work with the staff and Board of Opera House Arts to help get our theater back on track after the difficult Covid years," said Dewell. "Many small theaters across the country were unable to keep their doors open, and even the largest and most well-known venues in the country have greatly reduced their programming. Those that pulled through were able to do so only due to the generosity of donors committed to keeping the performing arts viable in their communities. We are fortunate to be one of them."

The Board of Directors is seeking its next director via a regional search. "As a resident of Deer Isle and past employee of Opera House Arts, Pam Dewell was able to quickly get up to speed, which illustrated how important it is to have someone familiar with rural communities and downeast Maine in that position," said David Stephens, Chair of Opera House Arts' Board of Directors. "And, given her extensive experience in the leadership of community-based non-profit organizations and professionalism, we are fortunate to have her assistance as we bring on our permanent Executive Director."

OHA provides a wide range of live performances, including professional theater in accordance with the Actors Equity Association and the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, which is unique for a venue in such a small community. Year-round offerings include blockbuster movies and alternative films, the Deer Isle Jazz Festival, and other concerts ranging from Broadway favorites to classical to folk and rock and roll. OHA's popular Live For \$5 series brings family-friendly variety acts to town and, thanks to underwriting by the WF Whitman Foundation, tickets are just \$5.

“We are grateful for the fabulous summer season we had,” said Dewell, “beginning with our Annual Gala which netted over \$120,000 and went a long way toward addressing a deficit. And then, thanks to Deer Isle Jazz Festival underwriting from Rich and Mary Howe, Herlin Riley and his New Orleans Band showed up and absolutely blew the doors off, setting the tone for the rest of the summer. We were especially excited to have Maine playwright John Cariani with us, too. He was so generous with his time, and the writing workshop he led was one of the best I’ve ever attended. We were thrilled to hear how much he appreciated Kathryn’s direction of his play, and hearing his laugh ring out from the back row of the theater cracked me up every night.”

The Opera House also opens its door for many community events each year, such as free movies for kids during school vacation weeks and collaborative events like the Stonington Spooktacular, which took place with enthusiastic and costumed families this past Saturday. Dewell also said that *Island Women Speak* will return in January to once again provide a unique opportunity to hear from prominent women in our island community.

“Local students are invited to attend all live performances for free,” said Dewell, “which is possible only with the support of our friends and donors and earnings from the summer months.” Dewell noted that this winter, OHA will again be offering Live in the Lobby gatherings including Open Mic nights on the first Thursday of each month and Trivia contests every third Thursday, funded in part by the Maine Community Foundation and proceeds from OHA’s Annual Gala. “This support allows us to offer programming as well as a place to gather during the winter months when so many other businesses are closed,” she said.

Opera House Arts seeks executive director candidates who are proven leaders with strong management and fundraising success, and a sincere interest in community engagement; experience with a performing arts organization would be a plus. The job posting on OHA’s website states, “The ideal candidate will be a persuasive and passionate communicator with a proven ability to work effectively with a staff and Board of Directors – and the broad constituency of partners and stakeholders required to successfully steward a performing arts organization and its historic facilities in this vibrant yet remote part of downeast Maine.” More information about the position requirements and how to apply may be found at operahousearts.org/work-with-us/

Opera House Arts, a 501 [c] [3] nonprofit organization, was founded in 1999 to restore the 1912 Stonington Opera House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and fulfill its original purpose as a performance space and community cornerstone. Professional theater, movies, variety acts, music and dance, educational programs, and special events are offered year-round.

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