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News Release

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Samuel Ramey returns to Wichita In Gounod's *Faust* on Mar. 29th

WICHITA – For the second consecutive year, the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation will make possible the return of Kansas native son and international opera superstar Samuel Ramey, as he takes the stage, starring in his most famous role of Mephistopheles in Gounod's haunting tale *Faust* on March 29th, 2008 at 7:00 pm at Century II.

The story takes place in Germany in the late 16th Century. The aged philosopher Dr. Faust sells his soul to the Devil (Mephistopheles) in exchange for restored youth so he can win the beautiful Marguerite. Marguerite succumbs to Dr. Faust's seduction, becomes outcast, kills his child and is condemned to death. Faust seeks to abduct her from prison, but Marguerite finally recognizes the Devil and prays for divine protection. Dying, her soul rises to heaven while Faust is constrained by the Devil to keep his fatal bargain.

Starring in this production is world renowned bass and Kansas native, **Samuel Ramey**, as Mephistopheles; one of Europe's star tenors, **Hector Sandoval**, as Dr. Faust; and European diva **Svetla Vassileva** making her WGO debut as Marguerite.

"Samuel Ramey is a national treasure," claims the Los Angeles Times. His versatility of talent has afforded him a dedicated 30-year career, landing him on the stages of every major opera house throughout the world, in addition to being the most recorded bass in history. Acclaimed also for his exceptional acting ability and splendid physique, he is credited with having helped popularize opera through his realistic portrayals. When he sang *Attila*, The New York Times called him "the Rambo of opera." People magazine put it this way: "Samuel Ramey is hot."

Dashing Mexican Tenor Hector Sandoval has become a Wichita audience favorite, following his performance as Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* last season. According to the *Wichita Eagle*, "Hector Sandoval is the real deal, already established in Europe. His clean, ardent tenor ideally conveys... youthful passion."

Svetla Vassileva is best known for her interpretation of Nedda in *I Pagliacci*. Her performance of that role opposite Roberto Alagna was released on DVD internationally in 2007. Ms. Vassileva stars regularly at La Scala, the Royal Opera Covent Garden and the Vienna State Opera.

Conducting the WGO Orchestra, Chorus and Soloists for this performance is Maestro **Martin Mazik**, principal conductor of the Slovakian National Opera. Maestro Mazik has appeared worldwide with major opera companies and orchestras including the Vienna State Opera; Tokyo Symphony Orchestra; Palm Beach Symphony; and the Prague State Opera, among others.

This Wichita Grand Opera production of ***Faust*** will be directed by **Martin Otava**, chief Stage Director of the Prague State Opera. Mr. Otava directs around the globe including Tokyo and Osaka, Japan; Catania, Italy; Cannes, France; Monte Carlo, Monaco; Munich and Bayreuth, Germany. The sets and costumes for this new production are designed by WGO's distinguished Artistic Director **Margaret Ann Pent**. Ms. Pent has directed and designed for the last five seasons with WGO. Her production of ***Carmen on the Lake*** at Bradley Fair received National and International recognition.

Others in the cast are WGO Resident Artist **William Browning** as Valentin, Marguerite's brother, **Amy Lynn Call** as Siebel, **Myrna Paris** as Marthe, and **Scott Conner** as Wagner.

Artist underwriting is provided by the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation. According to Susan Addington, community relations manager of the foundation, "The Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation is pleased to make possible Sam Ramey's return to Wichita. Promoting the arts in Kansas is a focus of the foundation and this underwriting is an opportunity to illustrate that commitment."

Tickets are still available at regular ticket prices ranging from \$80, \$50, and \$30 with some discounts available. Call the Wichita Grand Opera Box Office at 316-262-8054 or log on to www.selectseat.com to purchase your prime tickets today. For more information about Wichita Grand Opera's 2007-08 season, visit WGO's website at www.WichitaGrandOpera.org

This Faust production is sponsored in part by Cessna Aircraft Corporation, Dr. & Mrs. Joseph and Stella Galichia, and Ms. Carolyn A. Dillon.

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