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**OPERA.CA ANNOUNCES RECIPIENT OF THE
2009/10 NATIONAL OPERA DIRECTORS RECOGNITION AWARD
SPONSORED BY BMO FINANCIAL GROUP**

MS ALBERTA CEFIS OF OPERA ATELIER

Toronto, ON – Opera.ca, the national association for opera in Canada, is proud to announce the recipient of the Opera.ca National Opera Directors Recognition Program, **Ms Alberta Cefis**, Chair of the Board of Directors, for **Opera Atelier**. In its second year, this distinction, sponsored by BMO Financial Group, honours one opera board director annually for exemplary leadership and support on behalf of their opera company and the community they serve.

In acknowledging the dedication of board members across the country, the **National Opera Directors Recognition Award** highlights the tenets of good governance, celebrates models of volunteer excellence and raises the bar for board director commitment.

“BMO is pleased honour Ms Cefis as this year’s honouree of the National Opera Directors Recognition Award.” said Nada Ristich, Senior Manager, Corporate Donations, at BMO Financial Group. “As a supporter of many opera companies in Canada, BMO understands the critical role volunteer directors play in developing their local opera companies as cultural pillars in their community.”

“We are very proud that Alberta Cefis has been recognized with this award. Her dedication is matched by a genuine and passionate interest in opera and ballet,” stated Marshall Pynkoski, Co-Artistic Director for Opera Atelier. “She has led the company through very difficult times to a period of artistic creativity and financial and administrative stability that other companies only dream of.”

Pynkoski added that under Ms. Cefis’ leadership, the company has moved to a two-production subscription season in Toronto’s historic Elgin Theatre, selling up to 18,000 tickets a year, while continuing to tour every other year. The company’s budget is now approaching \$2.5M and under Ms Cefis’ aegis, Opera Atelier has realized a 30% increase in subscriptions and a 27% increase in fundraising revenues in the last fiscal year.

“Opera.ca is delighted to be joining with BMO Financial Group in extending this honour to Ms Cefis who has played a vital role for Opera Atelier” stated Christina Loewen, Executive Director for Opera.ca. “Opera.ca places a high priority on the development of leadership capacity within the opera sector and Ms Cefis represents the impact that this leadership can have within the governance of an opera company.”

An Adjudication Committee oversees the selection process, choosing one recipient annually. This year's Adjudication Committee was chaired by Opera.ca Board member, Monica Sloan, also past Chair of Calgary Opera. She was joined by Nada Ristich, Senior Manager, Corporate Donations, BMO Financial Group, Monette Malewski, an active business and community leader and president of École Supérieure de Ballet Contemporain de Montréal, Kevin Patterson, General Director, Austin Lyric Opera and Rob Collins, inaugural recipient and past board member of the Canadian Opera Company.

Opera.ca member companies are eligible to nominate one director each year for the honour.

Opera.ca's commitment to recognizing excellence in governance stems from a belief shared with sister association OPERA America, that the strength of an opera company is directly linked to the quality of governance demonstrated by its board members. OPERA America demonstrates this belief through their Annual National Opera Trustee Recognition Award, in which a single honouree is chosen from each of the four OPERA America budget levels.

Joining Ms Cefis in receiving this honour in February 2010 in New York City are OPERA America's National Opera Trustee Recognition honourees for 2009/10.

About Opera.ca

Opera.ca is the national association for opera companies and professionals in Canada. It seeks to create and sustain an environment that makes opera central to Canadian life. It works with members across the country to advance the interests of Canada's opera community and create greater opportunity for opera audiences and professionals alike.

About Opera Atelier

Opera Atelier is Canada's premier baroque theatre company, dedicated to producing opera, ballet and drama from the 17th and 18th centuries. While drawing upon the aesthetics and ideals of the period, Opera Atelier goes beyond "reconstruction" and infuses each production with an inventive theatricality that resonates with modern audiences. For more than two decades, under the direction of founders Marshall Pynkoski and Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg, Opera Atelier has garnered acclaim for its performances at home as well as in the United States, Europe and Asia.

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Alberta G. Cefis

Executive Vice-President & Head, Global Transaction Banking

As Executive Vice-President & Head, Global Transaction Banking (GTB), Alberta Cefis is leading the evolution of trade services, correspondent banking, cash management, payments, e-commerce and e-banking at Scotiabank in order to provide global business solutions to multinational, corporate, commercial and small business customers.

Alberta assumed her current position in May 2006. Prior to this role, she was Executive Vice-President, Domestic Personal Lending & Insurance, and President & CEO, Scotia Mortgage Corporation with responsibility for consumer and small business lending, commercial automotive lending, insurance services, and retail risk management.

Alberta joined Scotiabank in 1999. She has extensive experience in retail banking, wealth management, business banking, risk management, operations and service delivery, marketing, merger management, strategic planning and organizational development. She was named to *The 25 Women To Watch* in 2009, and was named to *The 25 Most Powerful Women In Banking* in 2008 (by US Banker); and, was named *Canadian Woman Leader of the Year* in 2007 (by the Federated Press). Alberta was inducted into “*The Hall of Fame*” of *Canada’s Top 100 Most Powerful Women* in 2007, and was named to the *Top 100 List* from 2003 to 2006 (by the Women’s Executive Network). She was the 2006 recipient of the *President’s Award* from the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Toronto, which honours individuals for business excellence. She was profiled in the 2006 book entitled *Celebration - 32 Inspiring Women of Italian Origin*. Alberta has co-authored a book, with Scotiabank colleague Roberta Hague, entitled “*The Truth About Mortgages – How To Make The Most Of Your Borrowing Power.*” The book, now in its second printing, is aimed at empowering customers in their decision making, and all proceeds are gifted to Habitat for Humanity.

Alberta is multilingual, and graduated from McGill University with both a Bachelor of Arts, Joint Honours degree in Political Science & Literature, and a Master in Business Administration. She is involved in a number of boards, industry associations and community endeavours. Currently, she is a Chair of the Board of Directors of Opera Atelier, a world-class baroque opera company in Toronto; Director of the Board of the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Toronto; and, Member of the Cabinet for the Sunnybrook Breast Cancer Research Centre Campaign. Alberta has also served as Director of the Visa International Board (from 2004-2007), and as Director of the Visa Canada Association Board (from 1999-2007); as Director of the Scotia Mortgage Corporation Board (from 1999-2006); as Chair of the Chip Executive Council (an industry committee that championed the migration to chip technology in Canada; from 2000-2006); and, she was Member of the National Advisory Committee for the United Nations’ 2006 World Urban Forum.