



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 2, 2012

CONTACT:
Paul Bilyeu, 813.222.1050 — paul.bilyeu@strazcenter.org or
Tara McNamara, 813.222.1059 — tara.mcnamara@strazcenter.org

President Barack Obama praises and congratulates Maestro Anton Coppola

Tampa, Fla. — President Barack Obama has offered Maestro Anton Coppola congratulations on his retirement from Opera Tampa.

President Obama's April 5 letter expresses pride for Coppola's "many accomplishments and contributions," and wishes him luck as the Maestro begins a new chapter in life. A copy of the letter is attached.

Following the April 22 performance of the company's production of *Aida*, Coppola retired from the podium after 17 years as founding artistic director of Opera Tampa. "I must confess, I will never be the same person without Opera Tampa," Coppola said, calling Straz Center President Judy Lisi his "blessed fairy godmother."

During his illustrious career, Coppola conducted almost all of the important opera companies in the United States and Canada including the San Francisco and New York City Operas. Known for his range and versatility, Coppola conducted the world premieres of *Lizzie Borden*, *Deseret* and *Of Mice and Men*, as well as many Broadway musicals. He worked with the Royal Opera Orchestra and opera soprano Angela Gheorghiu to release a complete recording of Puccini works. After serving four years as an army bandmaster during World War II, he moved on to conduct at Radio City Music Hall. For 15 years, he was the director of both the Symphony and Opera Departments at the Manhattan School of Music and holds a master's degree in composition. Among his larger works are a symphony, an opera, a violin concerto and numerous film scores. Coppola conducted important revivals of *Zaza*, *Mireille* and *Falstaff*, and appeared in his nephew Francis Ford Coppola's film, *Godfather III*. He also conducted the score for the Coppola film *Dracula*. Coppola has received honorary Doctorates from the University of Tampa and Quinniac University in Connecticut. He was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Puccini Foundation and recognized by the Italian government as Cavaliere, Gran Ufficiale. Coppola has conducted all of Opera Tampa's productions including *Madama Butterfly*, *Carmen*, *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *La Traviata*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, the world premiere of his own opera *Sacco & Vanzetti*, *Otello*, *Turandot* and many more.

Maestro Daniel Lipton, who has been appointed artistic director and conductor of Opera Tampa, will succeed Coppola. Details of the upcoming season and Lipton's first appearance with Opera Tampa will be announced in the next six weeks.

For more information about Opera Tampa and its upcoming events, visit www.operatampa.org.

PAC2012-156

The David A. Straz, Jr. Center for the Performing Arts and its programs are funded in part by the City of Tampa; the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners; the Tourist Development Council/Hillsborough County; the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the National Endowment for the Arts.