



**Arts Orange County** is the leader in building appreciation, participation and support for the arts and arts education throughout Orange County, operating the comprehensive online arts and cultural events resource SparkOC.com and producing the annual Imagination Celebration and Orange County Arts Awards. A private nonprofit organization, Arts Orange County serves as the officially-designated local arts agency of the County of Orange and state-local partner of the California Arts Council.

MEDIA RELEASE

## **Arts Leaders “Summit” Meeting Underscores Cooperation Among Orange County’s Major Arts Organizations and Urges Community Support**

**SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA – THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2008** – At a meeting convened yesterday by Arts Orange County, the chief executives of Orange County’s major arts institutions reaffirmed their commitment to work together to meet the immediate challenges their organizations face as a result of our nation’s severe economic downturn as well as to address the long term need to broaden participation in and funding for the arts and arts education in this community.

The leaders in attendance represented the largest budget nonprofit professional arts producing and presenting organizations in Orange County plus this community’s official arts council, Arts Orange County. (A complete list is attached.) This was the first meeting of this group in more than a decade, and the leaders agreed to gather again in several weeks.

“Though it’s a relatively young community, Orange County is already home to some world class artists and artistic organizations, generously supported by many passionate contributors and attendees,” commented Arts Orange County Executive Director Richard Stein. “We are aware of the serious economic challenges our entire community is experiencing right now, and are deeply sympathetic to those who have been most affected by it. However, we also want everyone to know that our own organizations have not been immune to these difficulties and that we are taking all necessary steps to adjust to the new financial realities. Under these circumstances, Orange County’s arts organizations need our community’s support more than ever, and Arts Orange County is developing plans to address this and asking the community to join with us.”

About the prospects for success, Stein added, “We are stepping up our engagement with individuals, business leaders, foundations and elected officials to provide them with a better understanding of the enormous benefits the community reaps from having healthy arts organizations. The facts are quite compelling and, I believe, will persuade them that all sectors have a vital stake in helping to sustain Orange County’s established and emerging cultural resources. They will discover that their investment in the arts produces an exponential return—not only in strengthening our arts community, but also in building a creative workforce through arts education, in retaining employees because of Orange County’s arts-rich quality of life, and in generating a positive economic impact not only in prosperous times, but in times like these, when it is needed most.”

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Attendees, listed in alphabetical order:

Mr. Bolton Colburn, Director, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach  
Mr. Peter Comiskey, Director, MUZEO, Anaheim  
Mr. Dean Corey, President & Artistic Director, Philharmonic Society of Orange County, Irvine  
Mr. Terrence W. Dwyer, President & Chief Operating Officer,  
Orange County Performing Arts Center, Costa Mesa  
Dr. David Emmes, Producing Artistic Director, South Coast Repertory, Costa Mesa  
Mr. John E. Forsythe, President, Pacific Symphony, Santa Ana  
Dr. Peter C. Keller, President, Bowers Museum of Cultural Art, Santa Ana  
Mr. Douglas C. Rankin, President, Irvine Barclay Theatre, Irvine  
Ms. Melanie Rios Glaser, Executive & Artistic Director, Saint Joseph Ballet, Santa Ana  
Ms. Kelly Ruggirello, President & Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Chorale, Santa Ana  
Mr. Richard A. Stein, Executive Director, Arts Orange County  
Mr. Dennis Szakacs, Director, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach  
Ms. Paula Tomei, Managing Director, South Coast Repertory, Costa Mesa  
Ms. Karen Wood, Managing Director, Laguna Playhouse, Laguna Beach