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Contact: Bob Farquharson
(518) 275-3072
Joe Fava
(518) 423-7456

***Schenectady Light Opera Company Unveils Plans for
New Performing Arts Center and Launches Capital Campaign***

Schenectady, N.Y., August 27, 2009 -- The Schenectady Light Opera Company (SLOC) today announced that it has signed a contract with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany to purchase the former St. John the Baptist Church in downtown Schenectady. The community theater group also unveiled plans to create a new performing arts center at the former church complex to house SLOC's annual productions as well as other arts and entertainment activity all year round. When fully developed, the new facility is expected to bring tens of thousands of people to downtown Schenectady every year.

SLOC is launching a capital campaign to raise additional funds needed to renovate the former church complex of three historic buildings in the heart of downtown, just a block from Proctors and the Bow Tie Cinema. One of the SLOC Board members leading the effort, Bob Farquharson said, "This project incorporates arts development, historic preservation and economic development in a truly unique way, creating a center for the performing arts that will become a vital component of Schenectady's growing arts and entertainment district."

Susan E. Savage, Chair of the Schenectady County Legislature said, "Over the past several years we have worked with Proctors and others to build a thriving downtown arts and entertainment district. This project will be an excellent addition to that effort and will maintain the historical integrity of this beautiful building. I hope the community will join me in supporting the Schenectady Light Opera Company to bring this project to fruition."

Mayor Brian U. Stratton said, "Schenectady Light Opera has long been a vital part of our community. We could not be more thrilled to welcome SLOC into the heart of Schenectady's revitalized downtown."

SLOC was founded in 1926, and is one of the oldest community theater groups in the United States. The organization is dedicated to producing professional quality musical theater for residents of the Capital Region and surrounding areas.

SLOC presented architectural plans for the first phase of the project, which will preserve the historic buildings, and innovatively reuse them to create:

- A 300 seat theater in the former church
- A professional training and education facility in the former school, and
- The Parish Residence will be converted for audience services, offices, and rehearsal space.

The capital campaign will be implemented in three phases over five years. “The campaign was designed with the current economy in mind, so that each phase of development will only be undertaken as funds are raised,” said Robert Harrison, VP of Fundraising and Development for Schenectady Light Opera Company. “This allows us to hit the ground running and hopefully get the new theater open in 2010. The response from potential donors has been overwhelmingly positive.”

As funds are raised for later phases, a new lobby will connect the Church and rectory, and a new stage house and set building facility will be added to the existing buildings, creating an integrated multi-venue complex with a campus like setting.

With initial commitments of funding, including long-time SLOC supporters and additional proceeds from the sale of its existing property, the Theater Company is approaching the halfway mark for Phase One of the Capital Campaign. The first phase will enable Schenectady Light Opera to purchase the buildings, and undertake the minimal renovations necessary to open as a theater, as well as basic renovations to the education building, including space suitable for other nonprofit and arts organizations. “The project builds upon our strong relationships within the community, and the campus like setting we hope will become a permanent home for a number of arts organizations,” said Joseph Fava, Vice President of Community Relations for SLOC.

The new location will allow SLOC to consolidate three existing locations including its performing space, a set building facility and a costume storage facility. In addition to enabling SLOC to consolidate operations, the new site was chosen for its central location within the growing downtown Arts and Entertainment District. The new facility will also be handicapped accessible and is surrounded by four different parking lots operated by Metroplex so it will be much easier for patrons to attend the theater and visit downtown businesses before or after the show.

SLOC is in discussions with Metroplex about selling a portion of the former church complex to be used as additional space for downtown parking. Metroplex needs additional space in this area to accommodate downtown visitors and tenants of the Center City complex which is undergoing a major \$20 million renovation and a 50,000 square foot addition. The project is also eligible for funding from the downtown façade program administered by the Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation (DSIC).

Jim Salengo, Executive Director of the DSIC said, “Schenectady Light Opera Company is certain to bolster downtown Schenectady’s reputation as a prime destination for arts and entertainment. The many patrons generated by SLOC will also mean a welcome new customer base for downtown’s outstanding restaurants and retailers.”

The property is currently under contract with the Diocese of Albany and a closing is planned for sometime later this year. SLOC worked closely with church leaders to develop the project, which will ensure the historic preservation of one of the oldest Catholic Churches in the Mohawk Valley.

“The Parish Family of the former St. John the Baptist Church is pleased that its historic church building will continue to be a significant part of the landscape of downtown Schenectady. As it now

becomes the home of SLOC, its tradition of benefit to the community will be continued and sustained for many years to come,” said Rick Johnson, Former Parish Council President at St. John the Baptist.

Ray Gillen, Metroplex Chair and Commissioner of Economic Development and Planning in Schenectady County said, “This is a great new use for the church which is located in a very strategic spot in downtown. This will bring more people and more excitement to our fast growing downtown.”

Capital Region residents interested in donating to the capital campaign should contact Bob Harrison at (518) 894-7788.