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NEWS

Opera is total package for Golden

CEO is on Wagner Society board of directors



Sept. 25, 2017

By Lori Sharn

Mark Golden was a college drama major when he signed up for a class about opera, thinking it would be easy. (It wasn't.) But the class sparked an interest in opera that continued long after he dropped acting for a career in association management.

Today, the CEO of the National Society of Professional Engineers is a fan of all opera, but is particularly enamored of works by Richard Wagner. Golden is on the board of directors of the Wagner Society of Washington, D.C., which kicked off its new season of concerts, lectures and special events Sept. 17. The society will also celebrate its 20th anniversary with a gala in early 2018 at the German ambassador's residence.

"Once you get the Wagner bug, nothing else will do," Golden said.

The reason is summed up in one German word, gesamtkunstwerk, meaning a total work of art. Golden said Wagner aspired to create a perfect balance of all the arts—including music, drama, poetry and design—and achieved it most closely with "The Ring of the Nibelung," his epic cycle of four operas.

Golden's premium membership in the Wagner Society helps support the training of promising young

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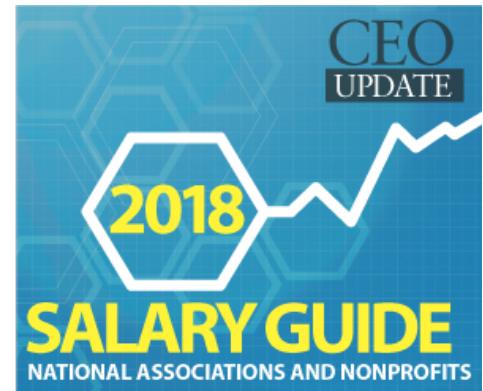
Association Leadership Awards 2017

singers through the American Wagner Project.

"Opera, like anything else, is facing challenges and changes," Golden said. "There's just fewer and fewer places where people are being prepared for opera. ... It's worth preserving."

Golden sees many parallels between opera and leading associations. (A bronze bust of Wagner sits on the credenza behind his desk, next to his ASAE Key Award.) A CEO needs to be like a maestro, Golden said, who can bring all the diverse parts of the organization into balance and discern what might be missing.

"Everybody cheers the tenor and loves the conductor, but if the performance works, it's bigger than" any individual, Golden said.



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