

## **BOARD OF REGENTS BRIEFING PAPER**

**1. AGENDA ITEM TITLE: UNR Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters to Dolora Zajick**

**MEETING DATE:** December 5-6, 2019

**2. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:**

The University of Nevada, Reno is pleased to nominate Dolora Zajick for Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters in proud recognition of her significant contributions to the operatic field, and her development of the Institute of Young Dramatic Voices at the University of Nevada, Reno.

On May 9, 2020 internationally acclaimed mezzo soprano and University of Nevada, Reno alumna Dolora Zajick will take her final bow on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center in New York City closing a forty-year operatic career and a thirty year association with one of the great opera companies in the world.

Oregon-born but Nevada raised, Dolora Zajick studied voice with Ted Puffer, the conductor and former Artistic Director of the Nevada Opera, as well as professor at the University of Nevada, Reno. She came to his attention when she joined the chorus of the Nevada Opera, while she was a pre-med student at the University of Nevada. She eventually graduated from the university with both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in music, before going to New York for further music studies at the Manhattan School of Music. After winning the Bronze Medal at the 7th International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow and being accepted in the San Francisco Opera's Merola Program, she made her major operatic debut with the San Francisco Opera as Azucena in *Il Trovatore* which launched her into international stardom.

Hailed as a "force of nature" (*Variety*), Dolora Zajick is that rare voice type, a true dramatic Verdi mezzo-soprano, typified by the composer's most famous and difficult mezzo soprano roles. Of those roles, she has performed Amneris in *Aida* over three hundred times, including her house debut at the Metropolitan Opera in 1988 and her final performances of the role in January of 2019. In addition to the operas of Verdi. She has performed significant roles in the operas of Bellini, Britten, Dvorak, Puccini, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner among others. She has appeared in opera and concert with some of the foremost conductors of the last fifty years including James Conlin, Valery Gergiev, Lorin Maazel, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Michael Tilson Thomas and the late Mstislav Rostropovich.

Miss Zajick has appeared on recordings of Verdi's *Aida*, *Il Trovatore* and *Don Carlo* on Sony Classical conducted by James Levine; *La Forza del Destino* and the Verdi Requiem with Riccardo Muti on EMI; *Alexander Nevsky* with Mstislav Rostropovich and *Herodiade* with Valery Gergiev, both on Sony Classical; and *Rusalka* with Sir Charles Mackerras on Decca. On Telarc, her highly acclaimed solo disc entitled *Dolora Zajick: The Art of the Dramatic Mezzo-Soprano* contains not only the dramatic mezzo-soprano arias for which she is famous, but also coloratura mezzo-soprano arias by Rossini and several dramatic soprano arias. Her most recent DVDs are the 2011 release of *Aida* from the Met's Live in HD series (Decca) and her 2008 performances of *Eboli* in Verdi's *Don Carlo* at La Scala (Hardy Classics), about which *Opera News* exclaimed '1110 don fatale,' a Zajick showstopper ... At this point in her vocal life, she can do almost anything."

In addition to her outstanding performance career, Miss Zajick is a passionate advocate for developing singers. In 2006 she created the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices to address the lack of training for large, dramatic voices required for the great roles of the Verdi, Strauss, and Wagner repertoire. The goal of the Institute is to find, develop, and inspire the next generation of these unique talents so they may reach the world's great opera stages. The Institute offers an innovative 3-week

intensive summer program to singers with large or unusual voices at varying levels of vocal development. Students study one-on-one with leading coaches and voice teachers who understand the nature of the developing voice. The Institute's carefully selected experts from across the industry work in close collaboration not only with the students, but with each other, to provide a solid foundation of the skills a professional singer needs to thrive in the operatic arena. It is Miss Zajick's strong belief that admittance to the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices be based solely on merit and musical potential - regardless of ability to pay. Thanks to the extraordinarily generous support of donors and sponsors, the program is offered free of tuition to participants. In 2015 Miss Zajick moved the institute from Utah to its current home on the campus of the University of Nevada, Reno.

In addition to her work on the operatic and concert stage and her work developing young voices, Miss Zajick is an accomplished visual artist, a dedicated poet, a lover of gardening, and more recently, a composer. Her compositional pursuits began when she suggested to the local Carmelite nuns that they put together a virtual choir uniting Carmelite nuns around the world. What resulted was a composition she developed about Teresa of Avila. It premiered in San Jose and was repeated in concert in Spain with the Orquesta y Coro de la Comunidad de Madrid to favorable reviews. Each year the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices performs at the local monastery and Miss Zajick herself sings The Office with nuns most mornings she is in Reno.

For extraordinary achievement in opera and an ongoing contribution to the University's and Reno's arts community, we nominate Dolora Zajick for the Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters designation at the University of Nevada, Reno. (Exhibit 1)

### **3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:**

President Marc Johnson requests approval for Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters to be awarded from the University of Nevada, Reno to Dolora Zajick.

### **4. IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):**

Dolora Zajick has 30 years of internationally recognized operatic accomplishments as well as the creation of the Institute of Young Dramatic Voices.

### **5. CHECK THE NSHE STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL THAT IS SUPPORTED BY THIS REQUEST:**

- Access (Increase participation in post-secondary education)
- Success (Increase student success)
- Close the Achievement Gap (Close the achievement gap among underserved student populations)
- Workforce (Collaboratively address the challenges of the workforce and industry education needs of Nevada)
- X Research (Co-develop solutions to the critical issues facing 21<sup>st</sup> century Nevada and raise the overall research profile)
- Not Applicable to NSHE Strategic Plan Goals

### **INDICATE HOW THE PROPOSAL SUPPORTS THE SPECIFIC STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL**

Dolora Zajick is a University of Nevada, Reno alumna. She is sharing her extraordinary operatic talent with University students, and her ongoing contribution to the University's and Reno's arts community, demonstrate her commitment to education. She has established the Institute of Young Dramatic Voices here on the University of Nevada, Reno campus.

**6. BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

Honorary degrees may be awarded to persons who have made significant contributions to improving the quality of academic programs and academic life at the University of Nevada, Reno.

- Won Bronze Medal at the 7<sup>th</sup> International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow and attended the San Francisco Opera's Merola Program.

- Hailed as a “force of nature” by Variety, Dolora Zajick is a true dramatic Verdi mezzo-soprano, typified by the composer’s most famous and difficult mezzo soprano roles.

- Zajick has appeared in opera and concert with some of the foremost conductors of the last fifty years including James Conlin, Valery Gergiev, Lorin Maazel, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Michael Tilson Thomas and the late Mstislav Rostropovich.

- Miss Zajick has appeared on recordings of Verdi's Aida, II Trovatore and Don Carlo on Sony Classical conducted by James Levine; La Forza del Destino and the Verdi Requiem with Riccardo Muti on EMI; Alexander Nevsky with Mstislav Rostropovich and Herodiade with Valery Gergiev, both on Sony Classical; and Rusalka with Sir Charles Mackerras on Decca.

- In addition to her outstanding and internationally recognized operatic performance career, Ms Zajick is a passionate advocate for developing singers. In 2006 she created the Institute of Young Dramatic Voices based on the University of Nevada, Reno campus. The goal of the Institute is to find, develop, and inspire the next generation of these unique talents so they may reach the world’s great opera stages. It is Miss Zajick’s strong belief that admittance to the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices be based solely on merit and musical potential – regardless of ability to pay. Thanks to the extraordinarily generous support of donors and sponsors, the program is offered free of tuition to participants.

- Zajick also composed a piece about Teresa of Avila. It premiered in San Jose and was repeated in concert in Spain with the Orquesta y Coro de la Cominidad de Madrid to favorable reviews.

**7. POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

There may be other individuals who need to be honored at this time.

**8. ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:**

Consider this request at another time.

**9. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE:**

**10. COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:**

- X Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # 4 Chapter # 1 Section # 15
- Amends Current Board Policy: Title # \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ Section # \_\_\_\_\_
- Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ Section # \_\_\_\_\_

X Other: Consistent with Procedures and Guidelines Manual Chapter 8, Section 1(2) \_\_\_\_\_

X Fiscal Impact: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No x \_\_\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_



## Honorary Degree

## Nomination Form

1. Degree to be Awarded:

Honorary Doctorate     Honorary Baccalaureate     Honorary Associate

2. Please state the name and address of your nominee for an Honorary Degree.

Dolora Zajick

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Honorary degrees shall be awarded to persons who have made significant contributions to the improvement of the quality of academic programs and academic life at one of the NSHE's institutions. Persons currently holding public elected office are not eligible for the degree except in extraordinary circumstances.

What are your reasons for nominating this person? (Attach additional pages, if necessary.)

Ms. Zajick is a University of Nevada, Alumna and an acclaimed mezzo soprano. She will take her final bow on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center in New York City closing a forty-year operatic career and a thirty year association with one of the great opera companies in the world. We would like to recognize her extraordinary achievements in opera and an ongoing contribution to the University's and Reno's arts community by nominating her to receive an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters. Please see the attached.

Dr. Marc Johnson

President

Date

University of Nevada, Reno

Institution

(B/R 3/03; Added 6/05)



College of Liberal Arts  
University of Nevada, Reno

October 1, 2019

## Letter of Nomination for Dolora Zajick

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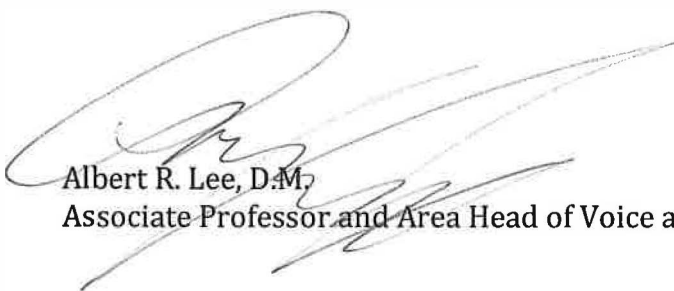
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(Decca) and her 2008 performances of Eboli in Verdi's *Don Carlo* at La Scala (Hardy Classics), about which Opera News exclaimed "*O don fatale, a Zajick showstopper...At this point in her vocal life, she can do almost anything.*"

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For extraordinary achievement in opera and an ongoing contribution to Reno's arts and religious community, we nominate Dolora Zajick for the Honorary Doctor of Musical Arts degree making her the first recipient of this new degree designation at the University of Nevada, Reno.



Albert R. Lee, D.M.  
Associate Professor and Area Head of Voice and Opera

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