

*Opera* VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL

*OVI*  
**GOOD  
IDEAS**

***EDUCATION***

**Projects for Children and  
Adults**  
2007-08 Edition

- ✓ Projects to Adapt and Make Your Own
- ✓ Successful Projects from Opera Guilds Large and Small

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## **What is OVI?**

*Opera Volunteers International was formed as a nonprofit educational and charitable organization of volunteer support groups, associations of volunteers, volunteer coordinators and individual volunteers to promote awareness of opera and encourage its growth in communities through volunteer activities, to stimulate interest and participation in opera for the benefit of the cultural, educational and musical life of a community, and to cooperate with other groups that share these objectives*

### **Helping Support Groups Be More Effective**

*As part of its mission to provide support to opera volunteers, OVI has for many years collected interesting, innovative and successful project ideas from its members from the United States, Canada, and Australia.*

*Many of the challenges faced by any one group of opera volunteers are those faced by every guild: raising funds, educating opera goers, maintaining and increasing a vibrant membership, building audience.*

### **About these Good Ideas**

*Groups that support companies both small and large, new and established, have contributed to this collection of projects. We have chosen to feature projects and programs that are primarily volunteer-conceived and volunteer-implemented. While every idea may not fit your needs, there are, we hope, enough ideas on which to build your own successful projects. Opera volunteer groups and guilds also offer financial support and other assistance for a myriad of projects that are managed and staffed by the companies they support. But that's another Good Ideas booklet.*

The Good Ideas Committee of OVI  
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June 2007

## **GOOD IDEAS: OPERA EDUCATION PROJECTS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS**

### **OPERA AMBASSADORS EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH**

Annually, Central Pennsylvania Youth Opera goes to public and private schools and home-schooler associations to introduce opera to schoolchildren in grades K through 12. CPYO brings young performers from the company, an accompanist, and a young CPYO docent narrator to perform highlights of an upcoming production.

Schools are sent educational information regarding the opera being performed, including background on the composer, plus a synopsis of the opera. After each program, CPYO members conduct a question-and-answer session. A questionnaire is sent to each participating class for feedback.

All of the volunteers are young members of the CPYO. They are given a series of four or five weekly rehearsals to prepare for the program.

The program is managed and funded through annual grants and efforts of the Executive Director and volunteers. The program is offered free of charge to participating schools.

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA YOUTH OPERA 2007

### **OPERA HOUSE AT CHILDREN'S MUSEUM**

Colorado Opera Festival Guild worked with college students and the staff and/or volunteers at the local children's museum to construct and install a model opera house, approximately 30-feet wide by 10-feet deep by 9-feet high, at the Children's Museum. The opera house includes a stage that is slightly raised from the floor, a side dressing area with mirrors, stage lights, sound capabilities, costumes and hats for the children to play with, and a ramped floor to make it wheelchair accessible. It is a place where children can experience on a daily basis many of the elements of opera such as music, costumes and fantasy play.

The opera house was designed by a college student with expertise in set design and construction. Guild members helped with construction, artwork and painting, and collected and constructed hats and costumes for the opera house.

The opera house was designed in separate panels and towers that screw together and can be dismantled for moving. It was constructed off-site and moved and assembled at the museum.

COLORADO OPERA FESTIVAL GUILD 1992

## **COMMUNITY LECTURES**

Volunteer members of the Lecture Corps give hundreds of free lectures about the season's operas in locations throughout Chicago and its suburbs. In addition to these lectures for adult audiences, lectures are given in junior and senior high schools to prepare them for special performances for students of an opera from the current season. Lecturers attend workshops for each opera and share information about the composer, the background of the opera, the libretto, and the music. Each volunteer prepares lectures with music excerpts. Each volunteer is expected to prepare lectures on at least two operas each season, and give a minimum number of lectures on each of their chosen operas.

Scheduling, training and monitoring is done by volunteer members of the Lecture Corps, which has its own by-laws.

While lectures are given without charge, organizations are encouraged to make a donation to the Education Department to support its programs.

LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO LECTURE CORPS 2007

## **OPERA THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS**

To increase young people's enjoyment of opera, the St. Louis Opera Guild and company created a semester-long course given at two schools: one, an eighth-grade class at a performing arts magnet school; the other for a class of gifted fifth-graders. The course covers the history of opera, study of the particular opera, including background of the composer and the librettist and study of the country in which the opera takes place. Students also learn about technical components of opera such as set and costume design. Students then choose a scene from the opera, which they rehearse and subsequently perform for Opera Theatre's artistic director. Students build their own set models, which are then displayed in the lobby of the theatre.

The curriculum emphasizes the process of producing an opera in order to heighten the students' appreciation and awareness. Equal time is given to studying the opera's music and story. Volunteer docents and members of the opera staff teach the course.

There is no charge to the schools. Any costs incurred are covered by the opera's education budget. Docents often donate audio and visual materials to the project.

ST. LOUIS OPERA GUILD

## **OPERA ROCKS!**

This program for young people under 18 is an ongoing project to encourage, develop and sustain their interest and that of their families in opera. Opera Rocks! members participate in projects and events throughout the year, including a day at the Summer Opera Festival and keeping an opera diary.

CENTRAL CITY OPERA HOUSE ASSOCIATION GUILD 2006

## **YOUR CHILD AND MUSIC**

Many parents are unsure when, where, or how to begin a musical education for their children. To help meet these needs, the guild developed a full-day program of workshops on topics such as "How, Why, When and Where To Develop A Child's Interest In Music;" "How to Design The Best Listening Environment in the Home;" "What Scientists Are Saying About Music and Cognitive Development;" as well as sessions that explore new areas in the field of music. The best available speakers on each subject are chosen to present a program and provide related take-home materials. Tickets entitle each participant to a get-acquainted breakfast, a keynote address by an opera singer parent, and a morning and afternoon program from among a choice of eight.

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA GUILD 2004

## **TALKING OPERA**

Glimmerglass Opera Guild created a program of four free seminars for adults designed to give insight into the coming season's operas. Each seminar gives a behind-the-scenes look at one of the operas, from details about the opera such as its background, historical framework and influences, to various aspects of the current production. The seminars are usually an hour long and are scheduled in the evening. The professional presenters volunteer their services. The Guild plans and implements the four programs and provides refreshments. The atmosphere is informal, affording an opportunity to socialize and exchange ideas.

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA GUILD 2007

## **THE COLLEGE OF OPERA KNOWLEDGE**

This project consists of a series of ten lectures given by five opera guild volunteers. The ten lectures cover the entire history of opera, from its development by the Camerata around the year 1600 to contemporary opera. The lectures involve extensive audio and video clips from many different operas, and slides and photographs projected onto a screen.

The lectures are given on ten successive Tuesday evenings. The only cost of the project is the printing and mailing of a flyer announcing the lectures, which the Guild pays for and includes as a line item in its budget. The lectures are given in a lecture hall at the headquarters of a local nonprofit foundation, which graciously donates the use of the room.

Through flyers printed and mailed to all season and single ticket purchasers, newspaper articles and calendar listings, free radio announcements, and articles in the opera company newsletter, the lectures drew a standing-room only audience. The lecture series is going to be repeated and videotaped so that it will be available for future sale or distribution.

THE KANSAS CITY LYRIC OPERA GUILD 2006

## **OPERATUNITY**

The purpose of Operatunity is to enhance the opera experience and education of high school students. Operatunity features a pizza and pop dinner for high school students followed by a presentation by a speaker about some aspect of the current production. The students are then bused to the opera house to see a technical dress rehearsal.

Students in vocal and instrumental music, theatre arts, and English departments at area high schools are invited to participate. The Guild locates venues and transportation. Students are charged a nominal fee just to cover food and transportation.

FRIENDS OF THE OPERA (OPERA GRAND RAPIDS) 1993

## **YOUTH PATCH PROGRAM**

The Guild worked with Scouting, Camp Fire, and classroom groups to develop an Opera Patch program that fosters appreciation for opera through organized, supervised activities.

The patch is earned by completing a series of activities chosen from a list of ten options approved by the Scout and Camp Fire organizations. The choice of activities is made in conjunction with a group leader; however, one mandatory activity is verified attendance at an opera performance and/or opera dress rehearsal.

The Guild developed and produced the patches and the brochures describing the program and the requirements to earn the patch. They also attended youth program leader meetings to promote the patch and participated in other promotional activities. The opera company handled patch order forms and open rehearsal reservations. The Youth Education Committee of the Guild distributed the patches to the youths who earned them along with a congratulatory note.

The nominal charge for the dress rehearsals covered the cost of the program.

OPERA OMAHA GUILD 1993

## **SPEAKERS BUREAU**

Originated by the Opera League, the Speakers Bureau is administered by the company using League volunteers. Speakers address schools; civic, social and philanthropic groups; and library audiences throughout southern California. Training is provided by the Education Division of LA Opera. Speakers can create and schedule their own assignments with civic organizations, as well as respond to requests from schools, senior centers, libraries, etc. The Education Division supervises and provides the necessary materials to ensure professional presentations.

A written and verbal skills assessment of volunteers is in place as well as training done jointly with the company. Meeting with the community to develop venues is an important part of the project.

OPERA LEAGUE OF LOS ANGELES 2007

## **READY, SET...OPERA!**

RSO is an interactive, 45-minute, staged and costumed program that introduces children in grades K through 5 to opera. Opera is a rarely performed genre in the public schools, and this program helps cultivate and grow interest through an age-appropriate, in-school program for children. It serves the Chattanooga Symphony and Opera Guild's purpose to support and further the interests of the CSOA through fundraising and bringing about an awareness of and an interest in opera to the community. It allows CSOA to expand its role as an essential and active partner, working with the school systems to provide music education. The objectives of this program include the promotion of children's cognitive, language and social skills and physical development, while building their artistic talents. Objectives are measured through participation of, observation of, and written communication from the students.

CHATTANOOGA OPERA GUILD 2007

## **YOUNG HANDS ON OPERA**

Young Hands on Opera tries to expose school-aged children and their families to opera in an informal environment. To do this and to build audiences for summer youth opera performances, the project provides an evening of events that includes an informal pizza dinner, mini singing and acting classes, and makeup and costume demonstrations. The finale of the evening is a performance by the children for their parents of a mini-aria about pasta.

Young Hands on Opera has used Black History Month as a platform for introducing minority students to opera. The evening featured the star of a youth opera performance of a work based on the true story of a freed slave.

CENTRAL CITY OPERA HOUSE ASSOCIATION GUILD 2004

## **OPERA IN THE CLASSROOM**

A single class receives a series of four visits by specially trained volunteer docents. The content and activities of the first visits (general information about opera, opera singing, terminology and familiar opera music) lead to a class performance of an opera from the standard repertoire with costumes, makeup, props and all the trappings of a real production that are brought to the classroom by the docent. The cast, conductor and orchestra are the students who lip-synch to recorded excerpts with a narrator illuminating the plot and the action.

The docent's preparatory lessons are supplemented by the teacher using materials supplied by the opera Education Department. Third- through sixth-grade students gain background knowledge of opera that rivals that of most adults.

The third visit is a rehearsal of the pantomimed performance of the actual selected opera. The final session is the performance of the opera, which is usually staged in a room large enough so that other classes and parents may attend.

LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO LECTURE CORPS 2007

## **UP ON OPERA TALK!**

Two affiliates of the opera company merged their opera preview projects and created one successful series of educational presentations designed not only to preview upcoming operas but to present master classes, backstage tours and in-depth interviews with opera stars and producers.

Programs utilize venues such as the museum, the performing arts center, the opera rehearsal hall, and even incorporate a live performance in the season's offerings. Every talk has a theme and a sponsor. Hostesses and volunteer servers provide the refreshments at each event themed to the presentation. Guests enjoying Cuban Art were served Cuban coffee and Cuban tapas while enjoying a Young Artist recital. For *Madama Butterfly*, husband and wife stars were interviewed and guests were served Japanese desserts and tea. A master class for the young artists was incorporated into the series featuring renowned opera stars from the Met. The company Music Director is always invited to host a talk.

An annual feature and highlight of the season is the Cognoscenti Roundtable where opera buffs and opera company administrators are invited to preview the coming season and review the highlights of the past season. Audience members are invited to try to "stump" the experts.

Multimedia presentations also have been offered and have developed into polished previews under the direction of one of the committee members.

THE CAMERATA (FLORIDA GRAND OPERA) 2002

## **PEANUT BUTTER AND PUCCINI**

Peanut Butter and Puccini is a family adventure that includes a tour of the opera house, a Guild-made sack lunch, and performance of a one-act opera.

Tickets are sold in advance to individuals and groups from day care centers, summer school classes, and participants in the OPERAtion Opera Community Outreach Program. Tickets are provided free of charge through agencies serving individuals who would otherwise be unable to attend a live opera performance. A corporate sponsor underwrites part of the cost.

One hundred people are accommodated each day, and adults must be accompanied by a child. On the morning of the event, participants are divided into groups. Each group visits the main stage, back stage, catwalk, orchestra pit, make-up and wig rooms, and the costume area with explanations about each area from a Guild guide. Staff is available to answer questions and do demonstrations.

After the tour, chorus members join the children for lunch. During the afternoon session, one act of an opera is performed preceded by preparation and a question- and answer-session.

DES MOINES METRO OPERA GUILD 2007

## **OPERA STUDY GROUP**

The Opera Study Group was formed to broaden the operatic education of its members and guests through group discussion based on a scholarly presentation, fellowship of opera enthusiasts and providing a welcoming environment for newcomers and novices.

The study group meets six times a year. Members select topics and prepare scholarly presentations that include information, musical excerpts and visual aids. The group meets in homes or appropriately themed locations. One meeting a year is devoted to a guest speaker who volunteers his or her talents and expertise. Several tour meetings have been held.

Two co-chairs of the volunteer-run group recruit hostesses, locations and presenters a year in advance. The intimate nature of the gatherings allows seasoned opera lovers to expand their skills in addressing less sophisticated groups, and new members appreciate a non-threatening yet mind-expanding environment to pursue their opera knowledge.

OPERA OMAHA GUILD 1995

## **REGIONAL GATHERINGS**

Gatherings are intimate social occasions hosted by League members in their homes throughout the Los Angeles area and Orange County. A volunteer speaker discusses an upcoming opera. Gatherings also serve as opportunities for new member recruitment. Admission is free for League members and non-League members. Refreshments are provided by a committee comprised of League members who also assist the hosts. A League coordinator helps find hosts, appropriate venues, and willing volunteers. The coordinator is assisted by one or two regional coordinators in each of nine geographic areas.

OPERA LEAGUE OF LOS ANGELES 2007