

**Examining the Canadian Opera Company's Role
in Opera Education in Ontario Schools: 1950–1990**

by

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**We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard**

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Abstract

As a music educator I discovered that many students shared my excitement about opera when it was part of their school program or on field trips to experience an opera. This discovery led me to wonder what opera education had been presented to teachers and students in the past and how effective these programs had been.

This thesis examines the Canadian Opera Company's (COC) role in opera education in Ontario schools from 1950-1990. This historical study focuses on five major research questions to determine what happened in opera education for Ontario students over a 4-decade period.

Data were collected in two ways. First, primary evidence was gathered from the *Joan Baille Archives* located in the Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Opera Centre in Toronto. Secondly, I interviewed four people who had been closely associated with the COC and were eye witnesses to some of the events over the 4 decades. The primary data from the *Joan Baille Archives* was organized by decade to address the five research questions. Interviews were transcribed and incorporated into the chronological events when applicable in order to relay the story.

Although the COC did not have an educational mandate for Ontario students, many factors still assisted the introduction of opera education to students. In the 1950s under Mr. Geiger-Torel's leadership, connections with local school boards were established. Mr. Geiger-Torel attended conferences and promoted opera for students when opportunities arose. The out-of-school programs for elementary students were introduced as excursions to an opera performance at either the O'Keefe Centre or the MacMillan Theatres in Toronto during the 1960s and early 1970s. The secondary students attended afternoon performances in the 1950s at the Royal Alexandra Theatre. From the 1960s until present day both the secondary and junior high students attended operas at the O'Keefe Centre with their class.

In-school elementary student programs began when the Prologue to the Performing Arts Program was introduced in the 1960s. The programs presented by the COC included a post opera chat with performers and a performance evaluation form for teachers. Pre-opera study guides in English or French and an opera cassette tape were provided for teachers and students in the 1980s. The operas for students were performed by the Ensemble starting in the 1980s. The out-of-town COC Opera Guilds provided leadership for the Prologue programs performed in Ontario communities outside the Toronto area. The COC was granted Canada Council and Ontario Arts Council grants to sustain the Prologue and Ensemble programs. Puppet opera was also introduced into the elementary schools in the early 1970s and continued successfully for a decade. In the 1980s the COC actively participated as the Canadian opera education representative for the new Opera America curriculum guide titled *Working Ideas*.

Although all the programs experienced positive feedback over the decades, they each also experienced financial setbacks that resulted in the cancellation of some programs and the development of new initiatives. The enduring value of the COC's educational initiatives remains unclear. The story continues.

Examiners:

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My mother Marion Smith and my companion John Tomlinson who encouraged me to accomplish the task as I grew personally and professionally along the way. Thanks for your tender support.

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DEDICATION

***Love and Appreciation
to my mother and father,
Marion and Bert Smith
and
in Loving Memory of
my Grandmother,
Margaret Manley***

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Rationale

My love for opera began around the age of 13. Although I had heard the sound of the operatic voices on recordings at home, it wasn't until I experienced opera as an audience member watching *Aida*, presented by the Canadian Opera Company (COC), that my lifetime fascination with the art form began. I remember how exciting it was to meet a few performers and obtain their autographs after the opera was over. I was thrilled to think that these trained and dedicated singers could sing so beautifully in a dramatized story that lured me into dreams about faraway places and times.

Before long, I developed a lifelong passion for opera which remains precious to me to this day. I was exposed to opera at an early age when my appreciation and love for opera were "caught" rather than "taught" (Miller, 1984); I might have been musically disadvantaged or far removed from the possibility of developing any understanding or love for opera if I had not been introduced to it at a young age by my school and my family. When I was introduced to live opera, I was, of course unaware of research concerning childrens' early exposure to opera (Sims,1992) or the significance my early childhood patterns, behaviours, and acquired habits in the arts would have upon the greater likelihood that they would persist in my adult years (Orend,1987).

Many years after I attended my first COC opera production, I found myself singing alongside a couple of my favourite opera stars as a member of the chorus in a hometown production; the experiences were unforgettable. With the dawn of a new dream that would enable me to sing for a living while at the same time allow me to pass on my enthusiasm and love of music to children, I became inspired to take the necessary training to become a music specialist. I realized that the opportunity to work in the schools would enable me to express my joy of music and passion for

opera.

I believed that as a music specialist, I could help students appreciate the value of opera and thus make a difference in their lives. I would expose children to opera music through the use of storytelling and in turn, help them learn about a rich part of Western cultural heritage which had the potential to give meaning to their lives. My students would have a chance to relate to the many emotions expressed on the operatic stage. Finally, the hyperbolic operatic story, encompassing so many artistic dimensions, could become a stimulus for their imagination and dreams.

Over 10 years, abridged short COC opera productions of *Hansel and Gretel* and *Cinderella* came to the school where I taught music. Students, parents, and teachers participated in the school evening trips to COC opera productions at the theatre and also attended COC Children's Opera productions at the Harbourfront Theatre. Following some of the performances, the audience had an opportunity to visit the COC facilities, enabling them to see and touch some of the props, view the variety of costumes, and witness how wigs were designed for the opera productions. Everyone who participated seemed to enjoy the experience. I observed the children's enthusiasm towards the programs and, since they had listened to an accompanying cassette tape supplied by the COC prior to their opera visits, their interest in learning about the types of opera voices. It was at this point that I recognized the impact these opera experiences were making in the lives of my students. My students were very interested, involved, and keenly wanting to know more.

I began to wonder about the experiences my students had encountered with the COC programs. For example, while describing the children's experiences, as part of the COC evaluation, along with considerations for future programs, I began wondering what the opera company hoped to achieve through their educational programs and how and why the school opera programs originated. Were the programs offered for children of all ages, and were they presented in different areas of Ontario? Had the programs expanded to larger audiences or were they diminishing? Were new programs offered over time? How many other schools

were involved in the education opera programs? I was mainly interested in how the school opera programs evolved over the years and how the educational approach had changed as a result of the COC's ongoing commitment to opera education.

My questions also related to the purpose of teaching aids, availability of resources, and how the success of the COC program was evaluated. I had observed, for example, how the students enjoyed writing and drawing in their COC opera booklets. I had also noticed that these student booklets were designed differently from the various resources that were used in the education system. The textbooks students used in other subjects were organized in a manner that demonstrated a progressive sequence of skills that needed to be understood and then mastered before students continued to a new skill level. My observation of the COC opera booklets prompted me to wonder what the COC hoped to achieve when the booklets were introduced in schools since there did not seem to be an exact order to the activities. I wondered what musical outcomes were expected.

In order to find some answers to my questions, I began to inquire among my music teacher colleagues and discovered that they were not really doing much as far as opera education was concerned. I wanted to know why the COC continued to offer opera in the schools when there seemed to be so little interest. I soon began to feel isolated with my concerns since nobody else appeared to be as interested in the subject matter.

I was still determined to find out what was happening in opera education in Ontario and decided to search for articles and books about other school opera programs. Soon I discovered that recognized music journals included a number of articles written about programs in the United States, but few articles originated in Canada. It was encouraging to find out that other opera education programs existed and were very successful.

In 1978, Henry Holt (1985) had a vision for the future of opera education in North America. As the Music and Education Director for both the Seattle Opera and Symphony, he inspired many opera companies in the United States to use his concepts and then soon became known as the "father of a new profession—opera

education” (Dedication). Holt described opera education as

part of an entire sequence of of arts exposures. It involves in-class arts and opera activities, non-competitive participation or exploration of the arts, education in “arts literacy” or aesthetics, production and performance of students, plus student attendance at professional performances. As part of each component, is the need to develop positive attitudes about opera, doing away with prejudice and stereotypes and allowing for positive input for students from their peers. (1985, Preface)

Both Neideg (1962, p. 49) and Le Vier (1971, p. 33) provided written examples which enabled me to understand how opera programs had been organized and taught in their own communities. Neideg created an opera unit that was only taught on Tuesday of every week during the second semester while the band, choir, theory and composition classes were held in music class time scheduled on another day. Neideg explained the opera story and had students ad lib the dialogue to fit the character played during class. Recordings of the associated arias were then played for the class. After 10 years of trying different ways to effectively teach about opera, Le Vier (1971) discovered that a complete immersion program for students worked best. She introduced her program in the following sequence: introduce the opera story; watch the associated opera movie; help students write their own libretto using their own words to sing to; play the operatic pieces from the opera in the background while groups work on their scripts, puppets, or scenery assignments; and perform the students’ version of the original opera. Le Vier (1971) described her goals:

By the time students had finished their presentations, they were no longer turned off by the very mention of the word opera. The objective of the total immersion unit is not to have the class sing *Carmen*, but to get them to listen to and like opera and to have a beginning knowledge of what this art form really is. (p. 33)

I found both the Neideg and Le Vier articles very interesting and helpful in organizing an opera unit. However, when I went to locate other opera resources to use in my music teaching, I discovered that nothing was available except a curriculum binder that could be purchased in the United States for \$350.00 U.S. I knew this

cost was not provided for in my school budget but nevertheless, decided to purchase this American curriculum, *Music! Words! Opera!*, with my own funds. I discovered this curriculum was “a set of sequenced resource materials designed to guide students to discover how opera relates to them and how they can create, produce, and perform their own works” (Driver, 1997, p. 20). I knew the *Music! Words! Opera!* curriculum would be a worthwhile investment for my program.

I was still concerned that there were few opera education resources available in Ontario so, in 1999, I decided to visit the COC education coordinator, Mr. Trevor Rines, who acknowledged that few materials were available for the teachers to use except the opera booklets produced by the COC. He also responded that he had not been approached by any researcher interested in examining the opera education program before. I was not surprised, since some other opera companies in Canada, such as the Pacific Opera Company located in Victoria, The Vancouver Opera Company, and Opera Lyre in Ottawa had told me the same thing. As a result, I found myself interested in learning more about the history of the COC’s education program and its relationship with the school system in southern Ontario, where I reside. Were the COC programs growing? Were students very interested? What was happening in the COC’s Outreach Department?

Rines was able to answer a few of my questions about the programs and chat about how his *Canadian Opera Education and Outreach* Department had been gradually expanding both its in-school and out-of-school offerings to include eight school programs and four extra-curricular programs. I learned that schools that booked a COC studio ensemble tour received a pre-recorded opera cassette tape, student curriculum booklets, and follow-up evaluation forms to use before and after the school tour. I asked if the evaluation forms had been saved in order to preview any concerns, requests, and comments for future research. Unfortunately none of the forms had been kept.

The COC had also offered periodic teacher workshops, while a voluntary secondary school opera committee continued to meet with representatives from the COC education department throughout the school year. I learned that the programs

were supported by private funding, donations, and government grants from the Ontario Arts Council. Rines also shared with me the then current 2000 COC brochure which outlined the programs offered to children.

As an active member of numerous music teacher's associations in my community, including the Ontario Music Educators Association, none of these, to my knowledge, had ever initiated or promoted opera education by recommending a review of past COC school opera programs. Most schools simply relied upon the COC or the Prologue for the Performing Arts programs to initiate opera in their schools. Little has been done about understanding the purpose of opera education, or how to create interest and prepare teachers for opera education in their schools. A historical overview would certainly provide a valuable resource for the COC to help them get a better understanding of past successes and failures and make necessary adaptations to better serve student learning.

The absence of information concerned me because I agree with Nevins (1962) who claimed that future decision making and clear direction are only achieved through the process of understanding the past. How is it possible to plan for the growth of opera education if there is no documentation describing what has happened in the past? A historical account could enable opera education to be more accountable and perhaps better accepted in the school system as a valuable part of music education. The study of opera could become an extension of the music program and "looked upon as more than an important body of musical literature. It becomes a record of the culture and is used as a means of expression to communicate with to students" (Smith, 1993, p. 21).

When I looked at the whole picture of opera education in the schools and its affiliation with the COC, I realized that a history that traces the COC's contributions to opera education in the schools was needed.

Research Purpose

The purpose of my research was to produce a historical account that examines the Canadian Opera Company's (COC) role in opera education in Ontario schools from 1950-1990.

Given the vast amount of data available from 1950 to 1990, the fact that documents from the 1990s were not well catalogued (Mrs. Birthe Joergensen, COC Joan Baille Archives), and the political sensitivity of some of the information that emerged in early conversations about more recent COC initiatives, I decided to limit my study to the 4 decades from 1950 to 1990.

The following questions were addressed.

1. What was the COC's education mandate since its inception in the 1950s?
2. What was the nature of the COC's education programs and how and why did they evolve over time?
3. What factors helped the COC achieve its education goals?
4. What factors hindered the COC's education programs?
5. How successful was the COC's educational outreach over the 40 years in this study?

Chapter Two reviews the literature pertaining to opera education for students using Canadian and American Music journals and periodicals as sources. Chapter Three describes the historical research methodology used and how it was applied to this study; the chapter also outlines tasks undertaken to complete the research.

Chapters Four through Seven describe the historical events that transpired in the decades between 1950 and 1990. Each of the research questions was addressed within the body of the chapter. Chapter Eight, the final chapter, summarizes the findings of the investigation and suggests recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The review of the literature is divided into four main sections. The first section explores why opera education is important for children. The second section relates the importance of early exposure to opera education. The third section reviews what's been happening in opera education in the United States. This section is subdivided into five smaller areas: curriculum; opera outreach—in-school tour programs; opera outreach—out-of-school programs; community opera programs; and the response to opera education programs. The fourth main section reviews challenges to opera education in the United States.

Why Opera Education for Children

Why promote and provide opera education for children? Miller (1984) suggests that there are many significant reasons why children who are in kindergarten and the primary grades should study opera. One reason is to enhance their imaginations: "If, for various reasons, children cannot attend a live performance of an opera...or a portion of one...the wise teacher will call into play the children's powers of imaginative visualization" (p. 52). Miller suggests that teachers encourage children to create big dreams, as children should. The study of opera, however, allows for more than dreaming; it allows for action, through performance, observation, or participation. The dream world suddenly comes alive and transports a student from fantasy land into a world of creative reality. According to Miller, this active dreaming and visualization could develop habits of mind that foster creativity in other areas of children's lives.

Ames (1993) explained that having students plan an opera together, what he called a collaborative opera project, is destined to "empower the students, not dominate them, analyze their creative strengths" (p. 31). The collaborative model allows all the students involved in an opera project to become engaged, while full student leadership is encouraged through involvement in decision making. Realistic

expectations are set and followed through at each stage. Success is recognized as students are observed working cooperatively with an assigned mentor. The advantage of the collaborative model is that it can be used in any classroom environment and could possibly be the greatest form of artistic collaboration as the “words marry music; then performers work with both and add acting to the formula” (p. 31). Ames suggested that students should “experience not just the sight and sound of an opera, but the creation of one from the ground up” (p. 31).

An example of experiencing opera from its conception was provided by Raplenovich (1996) who described a group of junior high school students as they planned an opera. Everything they needed was pulled out of an old trunk. The opera was then run like a professional company; each student signed a contract for agreed services. Students did everything that was involved in the opera, including auditioning for their parts and taking care of all the scenery, props, costumes, makeup, and lighting. The result? Performance skills grew as students worked through the performance process, and school performances were then followed by a tour to seniors’ homes and other schools.

Bessom (1979) asserted that when students are able to produce and perform their own opera, using a collaborative model perhaps like that described by Ames (1993), students learn about music and drama through direct involvement. At this point, students develop new and different perspectives as well as useful lifelong skills.

One of these skills is the art of storytelling. When the Ohio Arts Council assisted teachers and students through the process of creating an original opera conceived by students, the local opera company showed the children that opera could be understood and approached as a method of telling a story through singing. They demonstrated this point through the medium of opera while creating a story that integrated parts of a child's life experiences along with drama, music, movement, and visual arts (Raplenovich, 1996).

According to Jameson (1994), the combination of music and drama is used to help “individuals and groups develop an understanding and respect for the human

spirit” (p.19). He also states that there are many advantages and skills that opera education presents to children:

The educated citizen of the future, having a sense of history and tradition, will be an adaptable human being, a team player, yet maintaining a strong sense of self, with the capacity of responsible self-expression. Opera can realize some of this. Individuals can participate in opera as creators, audiences, analysts, and performers. A sense of community arises from participation in the unique experience offered by the opera in the expression of the human spirit. (p. 23)

Fowler (1997) explained further that the study of opera for children is a multi-art form which allows students to explore all forms of communication through the use of words, music, dramatic expression, and visual arts: “As a form of human expression, opera challenges students to reach beyond speaking and writing and to think more comprehensively about their own ability to think and communicate” (p. 20).

Smith (1993) agreed that students learn to communicate through the opera story by combining music, literature, poetry, theatre, and dance in order to illuminate feelings and experiences more profound than any art form can accomplish by itself. Opera then becomes a medium for communication and creates something close to a personal life experience where a high level of commitment and shared ownership in the program becomes evident. The intrinsic reward for cooperative effort becomes enhanced while personal level of self esteem gets a boost (Smith,1993).

Musical skills are also learned in an opera education program. Speake (1993) found that in her 27 years of teaching music, she included some opera education because “the world of opera can be introduced to second graders or college level education majors since so many musical skills are learned through the medium of opera” (p. 22).

Miller (1984) agreed that music teachers have the chance to introduce vocal development skills to students and include the study of opera singer voices as examples. In his account, students became acquainted with varying vocal ranges, proper use of the diaphragm, a singer's physical conditioning, and the use of proper

breath control. Students also learned that the voice is a musical instrument and that the incorporation of vocal exercises, along with proper breathing and projection, help one place the voice properly. They learned about the meaning and purpose of an aria and how it releases the inner feelings of the character when singing it. Miller believed that

these studies [in opera] are highly personalized, success is virtually assured. Through the approaches suggested here, it is hoped that more teachers will actively present opera studies to children, so that in time they too can experience the joys many of us know are associated with this wonderful type of music. (p. 54)

Students paired with opera singers learned to “project their voices and use a higher level of dramatic energy on stage by participating with these mature artists” (Kleinman, 1990, p. 58). They also learned to show respect and appreciation for the singers who became their mentors.

Block (1971) agreed that musical skills were strengthened when an operetta was presented by 6-to 8-year old children. He discovered that through the study of opera an "appreciation of music and of the relationships of cultures alien to the children were also undoubtedly clarified. The primary grades need not be neglected in this endeavour. The operetta for young children is a small step, but in the right direction" (p. 31).

Bland (1993) viewed her music program, including the production of an opera for her students with learning difficulties, as an opportunity to reach out to children. She discovered that an understanding and appreciation for music developed when her students became eager to hear, listen to, and read the opera music of *Romeo and Juliet* (Gounod).

Self-discipline is another skill that developed among students participating in an opera program. For example, the project of performing an opera was greeted with open arms by children who knew little about opera (Bland, 1993). A general meeting was held for students who wanted to be involved, and student jobs were assigned. Opera rehearsals were held an hour before school, and the students were often waiting and ready to begin. Bland recalled that students

started finding niches that carried on throughout the day and eventually their lives. What had once been a large group of irresponsible children, turned into a cadre of focused and motivated middle school young adults. The students were functioning as directed, responsible people. (p. 29)

Students demonstrated a great deal of self-discipline, which demonstrates how skills for life can be instilled through opera study.

Hannahs (1975) described how high school students involved in the school opera performance achieved academic excellence in their school work. Hannahs chose *The Marriage of Figaro* (Mozart) and decided to have the recitative spoken rather than sung by the students. Because rehearsals were held out of school time, students required self-discipline and a sense of responsibility to be at rehearsals on time. Although the students' voices grew stronger, resonant, and expressive, "a curious phenomenon happened. Several in the cast reported that their school work had improved" (p. 76). One student who played the lead role had the best report card she'd ever had. There was something unique happening in the school music program right on the stage.

Smith (1993) believed the value of opera education was in the creation of operatic works in which students were introduced to composing, writing, and staging as a part of an inter-disciplinary curriculum: "Opera is then looked upon as more than an important body of musical literature. It becomes a record of the culture and is used as a means of expression to communicate with students" (p. 21).

Jameson (1994) agreed with Smith (1993) when he wrote that opera (when the art forms of music, drama, visual arts, and dance are combined) can be used as a tool for meeting the curriculum needs within a school.

Block (1971) addressed the curriculum requirements in many subject areas other than music when she planned her student presentation of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*. Initially, the 7- and 8-year-old children learned about Japan in their social studies class, before the performance rehearsals began.

Bland (1993) discovered that opera education was an alternative method of teaching and a valuable tool for her grades 5 to 8 at-risk students. The study of

opera became an alternative method of working with her group of children with learning difficulties in order to teach basic skills to students who had little exposure to music in their past (other than rap). She discovered that through the introduction of opera, the children soared to heights that no one dreamed them capable of attaining in fields as diverse as language arts, science, math, history, reading, literature, art, and, of course, music. Bland summarized that “creating original opera should be titled creating the whole child and enjoying every moment of the experience along the way” (p. 27). The rewards of performing an opera were tremendous in the Manhattan School Preparatory Division. Each year, the production, the artistic, and the musical levels of achievement improved, and the number of parents and students giving of their time to help the production was impressive. Eventually, the Manhattan School decided to expand and assist another school in preparing for an opera. Thanks to a grant given to Public School 75, its fifty grades 3 through 6 volunteers were ready to begin performing a short opera.

In summary, opera education for children can develop important life skills and also promote a sense of community among the participants. It releases the human spirit, incorporates a multi-arts approach, facilitates communication skills, relates to the human condition, furthers multiculturalism, promotes collaboration and cooperation, stimulates creative imagination, develops the art of storytelling, enhances various musical skills such as vocal and performance skills, develops a form of respect for others, enhances school marks, teaches self-discipline, and provides an interdisciplinary curriculum. Bessom (1979) eloquently summarized the reasons for opera education: “An opera project can yield dividends of knowledge, cooperation, and self-discovery in multiple directions,” but he cautions that the investment in “time, money and energy can be high” (p. 32).

Importance of Early Exposure to Opera Education

When should opera education be introduced in the schools? Sims (1990) researched the results of children's exposure to opera at an early age and speculated that a rise in adult attendance at live opera performances by professional companies could well be the result of early childhood exposure to opera.

Orend (1987), who studied the subject of early exposure, shared a belief in the significance of early childhood patterns and behaviours of children involved in the arts. He discovered that if children were involved in the arts at an early age, there was a greater likelihood that they would acquire habits which would persist in their adult lives.

Miller (1984) also believed that introducing children to the arts as early as possible allowed the appreciation level to become naturally integrated into their lives. He claimed that withholding opera presentations from children musically disadvantaged them. The chances of a child developing an understanding or love of opera is greatly diminished without an introduction to it at a young age by parents or schools. Miller claimed that

it is safe to point out that the younger the children are, the more apt they are to accept the sound of the operatic voice. More problems seem to arise with older children who have not been privileged to hear opera early in life. As children mature, however, they are naturally interested in the phenomenon of vocal growth and physiology. (p. 54)

The Scholar Opera Company Director agreed about the importance of early childhood exposure as he described his observations of students' enjoyment of opera presented at their school. It was his 130th school visit that year. He claimed that it was the "affirmative experience in childhood that had turned them on to opera. Why not expose young children to this art? And better yet, why not bring the art to them" (Mann, 1984, p. 57).

When Sims (1992) compared the attitudes of elementary children in grades 4-6 towards opera performance, she discovered that the attitudes of the students who attended an opera were much more positive than those of the students who did not attend an opera performance at their school.

Caldwell (1967) looked into the future of opera in America and believed that developing audiences interested in opera at an early age could be a way of maintaining opera within the United States. As Artistic Director of the National Opera Company, Caldwell felt that presenting short opera productions to disadvantaged children as part of a pilot project would be one way to discover if opera might help

them.

Although it seems that the research supports the benefits of early student exposure for opera companies who can presumably count on larger audiences, the section on the importance of opera education indicates that the children benefit as well.

What's Happening in Opera Education in the United States

The United States is an established and respected leader in many fields, including music education. What happens there often influences Canadian life and decision making. It would therefore seem helpful to review American opera education programs before considering what is happening in Canada.

Curriculum. After an introduction, four sites of curriculum study are discussed: opera outreach (in-school tour programs), opera outreach (out of school programs), community opera programs, and the response to opera education programs. The material is examined topically rather than chronologically.

In response to the question "Why opera education," I looked at some of the programs used for opera education in the schools. Students produce and perform in an opera, attend a live opera, or have the opera troupe visit the school for an abbreviated performance; but opera studies can be introduced in many other ways that are not often used or thought about by educators. A pre-planned opera curriculum can integrate various school subject areas in order to provide a complete learning experience for students. An example of a popular opera curriculum promoted by Opera America is titled *Opera ! Words ! Music !* (1990). Both classroom and music teachers are able to follow the well planned, easy-to-understand program or choose to coordinate it with the assistance of a local opera company.

Working Ideas (Opera America, 1985) was written by professional opera educators for themselves and others who desired to create and improve their current programs. One section deals with the process of developing opera education programs. Another section provides examples of programs used in the United States and Canada. A third section of the book provides guidelines to use in

planning a comprehensive program.

Music ! Words! Opera! (1990) is a sequenced opera curriculum for grades K-12 students. The program was created by opera and educational professionals who recognized the need for an integrated curriculum to address the historic, linguistic, and cultural diversity within America. A teacher's manual, a compact disc with recorded opera excerpts, and student study books are included in the program materials, which have been designed for both music specialists and general classroom teachers. Helping students discover the connection between opera and their own life experiences through creating, producing, and performing their own works is considered a fundamental route to success in the program. Students are encouraged by their teachers to use creative and critical thinking processes in order to examine their culture and times. When the *Music! Words! Opera!* curriculum was introduced to teachers in the United States in 1991, teachers began producing their own operas.

Bullen (1993) explained how a group of teachers collaborated with the Sarasota Opera Company in order to share curriculum materials with each other and acquire information that would help prepare their students for the upcoming productions of Rossini's *Barber of Seville* and Bizet's *Carmen*. A curriculum support staff from the school representing foreign languages, social studies, and visual arts departments also joined the meeting, along with the local Opera Guild. Strategies for classroom instruction that centered around "developing an approach in which students would assume the role of production teams and complete a notebook to document their decision making processes and outcomes" were discussed at a meeting (p. 36). The Sarasota Opera Company had free tickets and full day visits available for the teachers involved at that time to show their continued support for collaborative efforts. Together, the opera company and the school boards "built a history of successful OPERAtions. A relationship of mutual respect and trust now exists between the two, helping them cope with the hard economic and political realities that currently exist in both the arts and education" (p.39).

An earlier school tour opera program had also encountered concerns relating to the opera curriculum being studied in the school prior to their visit. Bessom (1979)

suggested that teachers ensure the presentation be appropriately matched with the opera curriculum being studied and that children be prepared for the opera production they were about to see. He also suggested that when teachers choose an opera curriculum, they should consider what the students' expectations are so they will ultimately learn about and experience opera to the fullest. Although many opera companies had attempted to base their presentations to the interests and needs of the students over the years, Bessom was confident that opera companies had recently come "closer to communicating the idea that opera is simply a play or story set to music, a rather basic form of entertainment and not some elitist, unreal extravaganza" (p. 32). Bessom concluded that "it's important more than ever that students get some opportunity to experience a multi-arts form like opera. Most teachers still feel the responsibility of broadening their students' horizons and opening up new worlds for them. Opera can do that"(p. 34).

In the 1980s the San Francisco Opera Guild took responsibility for providing materials about the historical aspects of operas and the related composers to more than seventy schools. They discovered through their efforts that it was not unusual to have yearly waiting list of schools ready to book the opera company. When they were asked why they provided curriculum materials for the schools, their reply was: "Our purpose is to give the children a better understanding and appreciation of the opera through an insight into the preparation of such an event" (Mann, 1984, p. 57).

Milak (1972) discussed another example of preparation before the concert whereby 6th grade students' attitudes and cognitive learning skills were investigated to find out if there was any difference between using an opera curriculum or not before a concert. Four groups were used. Of the four groups, two attended six different concerts. Of the two that attended concerts, one group studied from a specially designed curriculum before the concert night took place, while the other group listened to recordings before the concert dates. Those who studied from the curriculum "were affected by the amount of learning to a greater degree" than those who listened to recordings and subsequently attended concerts. Results showed that the one group that received curriculum learning and also attended the concerts,

improved greatly in overall attitude. Six months later this same group continued to make positive steady improvements (p. 10).

Bessom (1979) suggested that since "opera education has taken on a number of different meanings and values" (p. 32), teachers should first consider the educational objectives and ask themselves what they ultimately want their students to learn. If the purpose is exposure, students should be introduced to different styles and forms of some opera repertoire allowing for sufficient classroom preparation and a final visit to a live opera performance. These students learn "about" opera, which differs from another approach which is learning "through" opera.

Bessom recognized that students developed an enhanced perspective of opera when they were involved in learning and participating in such aspects as set design, makeup, and lighting. The "through" opera curriculum experience had students write and produce an original opera and was at times followed up with a trip to see an opera. The majority of the time was devoted to learning about the music and the theatre. Bessom wrote that the "opera project can yield dividends of knowledge, cooperation, and self-discovery in multiple directions, though the investment in time, money and energy can be high" (p. 32).

LeVier (1971) explained how she tried to present different kinds of music in her curriculum, especially opera and classical music in a community that was dominated by rock, pop, and country music. After a 10-year period of introducing her opera and classical music to her students, she discovered that a curriculum involving the "total immersion" approach to learning about opera during a 6-week opera unit was the method that worked best with her 7th-grade students.

Smith (1993) set his curriculum up as an interdisciplinary project to address different subject areas and found involvement in different aspects of opera was an excellent way of introducing it to students. Students then went about creating an opera while learning to compose, write, and stage the opera. Through this approach they learned useful skills that could eventually be transferred to other areas of their lives.

Wignall (1988) concluded that children could be inspired by the world of

opera when it is presented in a way that relates to their own world. In a similar opera project Bland (1993) explained how the teachers became the resource centre as the children did the preparation for the opera.

Bessom (1979) suggested that having a live opera for the children to experience is an important part of an opera education program. However, if a school were either financially or geographically unable to have a live visit from the opera, he recommended that teachers create a program using filmstrips, slides, teachers' guides, and recordings in order to provide an elaborate audiovisual presentation, based on almost any possible opera theme or subject. He also recommended that teachers can dramatize specific scenes with their students or plan a complete production, since more than 500 operas have been written for students. Some of the productions now include Orff instruments, recorders, and fifes and drums, allowing for accompaniment variation. Bessom also suggested that a good opera program should be well planned for students to receive the best benefits:

Interest in opera has been growing, and abundant resources are available to teachers to choose to make use of them. As always, educators who carefully select and evaluate the learning experiences they use will provide their students with the best opportunities for growth and self-discovery. Projects and presentations should be tailored to a given class's needs and interests for maximum impact. (p. 34)

Drago (1993) informed us that a good opera course should begin with defining opera terminology through exploration and examples while the teacher's role is to provide students with encouragement and a variety of opportunities to learn about opera. The operas selected by the teacher should be varied, appeal to the age group, be accessible, and include some comic opera.

According to Drago (1993), a multimedia approach to teaching opera education is another way of preparing a curriculum. Both students and teachers have access to videos, compact discs, and the use of HyperCard in order to obtain valuable biographical information about composers and live opera experiences outside the classroom.

Lamb (1991) also described a hypermedia compact disc program designed

to provide a tool for both beginning and more advanced music lovers for learning about opera. One example is the use of Mozart's opera, *The Magic Flute*. Lamb described the hardware and the software required to study the multimedia program that includes information about the composer, the history, and the language in which the opera is sung.

Another form of multimedia opera curriculum is one suggested by Hostetter (1979) as a great way to incorporate the study of opera. He suggested that students watch opera telecasts when they appear on the TV. The teacher's role is to find out ahead of time which operas are being presented in the upcoming year and choose operas suited to the grade levels being taught. As well, the teacher should think about the different methods of approaching the study of the operas and finally decide whether to introduce a number of them to the students in order to compare and contrast the different styles or to study one opera in depth. Since the television presents a visual as well as an aural experience for the students, the preparation for the opera telecast should also include the study of the scenery and the drama (Hostetter, 1979). The advantage of the opera telecast allows the students to read the subtitles in English even though the opera is usually sung in another language.

Miller (1984) suggested teachers choose short scenes with beautiful music and dramatic action in order to appeal to the children when introducing an opera unit. Some of the choices might include the famous prayer scene from Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, humorous scenes from Mozart's *Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore*, or dramatic scenes from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Miller also suggested that certain portions of whole operas are most suitable for presenting to students. Examples of short sections which might be studied for no more than 2 weeks are: Bizet's *Carmen*, Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, or Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*, for the older children. Teachers are advised only to play a portion of an opera the first day it is introduced in order to keep the children's attention. Students should also be encouraged to purchase their own recordings of the opera so they may enjoy them at home.

According to Hostetter (1979), the place to begin learning about opera, no

matter what the age, is with the story and the characters as they reveal themselves in the libretto. Students divide into groups and do a choral reading of one short excerpt from the opera and discuss and describe the characters' motivations and feelings. The students may then volunteer to do an improvised dialogue of what they have just read. At this point, Hostetter introduced the music to the opera, starting with the overture and then asked students to determine where the opera might take place and how they might analyze the music they heard. Hostetter's approach to curriculum worked well for him yet may vary for another teacher residing elsewhere or teaching at different grade levels.

It was informative to review the variety of opera programs; all have maintained similar goals of planned opera education for children in order to attempt to provide meaningful experiences for students. The curriculum can be enhanced by experiences with live opera. Three examples of opera program types will be considered.

Opera Outreach–In-School Tour Programs. Some schools schedule a touring group to come to their school and at the same time plan their opera program around this visit. The in-school program consists of an ensemble of opera singers sent by the opera company to present a partial opera, opera excerpts, or short original operas written for students. Students learn how to become audience members in their own school environment as they watch the visiting troupe. There are different forms of in-school opera programs.

Drago (1993) said that students should experience what it is like to become part of an opera audience when an in-school tour comes to present its opera. Both the class preparation and the interaction before and after the performance should be equally important when preparing for the visiting troupe.

Kleinman (1990) referred to a mini version of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* that was presented by two performers and an accompanist from the Cleveland Opera Company at a junior high school. The ensemble not only performed the opera presentation but involved some students directly on the stage. Students were later paired up with the professional opera singers because "the students

wanted to participate, not just to watch and listen to the performances of the others” (p. 58).

Mann (1984) explained how the Scholar Opera Company believes in bringing opera to the students: “Why not bring the art to them?” The Scholar Opera Company visited 130 schools per year and were confident that their presentations were a very positive experience for the children (p. 57).

Bullen (1993) also explained how two schools collaborated to invite a pair of opera singers to visit each of their schools. The performers sang operatic arias and then discussed the story line of the opera *Carmen* with the students. The study of Bizet’s *Carmen* was integrated into other subject areas in the weeks following the performance. Some classes were able to do their own interpretations of the opera at a later date while continuing their study of *Carmen* in social studies, English, and visual arts classes.

A small ensemble presented *A Piano Comes to Arkansas* composed by Haskins and librettist Koppenhaver to around 4,500 elementary children in a number of schools in Ohio. Koppenhaver (1979) also collaborated with Robert Haskins on a number of one-act operas to present to students on their tour. The ensemble touring group continued with the tour in the next year because of its successful experiences.

Another type of an in-school program involves the use of volunteers going into the school to prepare students for their upcoming opera visit. About one month before the visiting San Francisco Opera Company came to the school, Mann (1984) recalled the San Francisco Opera Guild supplied volunteers to go into the school and prepare students for the upcoming opera. The volunteers displayed pictures, costume sketches, and explained the historical background of the opera. Straka, the Director of the opera company, observed the children’s behaviour once they were introduced to an opera production and commented that “after being exposed to our in-school programs, many of the children bring their parents to the opera...an unusual switch” (p. 57).

In-school programs have been popular in many areas since they enable students to see an opera, often for the first time. Nevertheless, out-of-school

programs are a valuable opportunity to those students who are able to attend.

Opera Outreach—Out-of-School Programs. Out-of-school programs take students off school ground premises and involve them in some form of opera education. For example, students may attend an opera being presented or visit the opera company premises, enabling students to gain first hand knowledge about the use of props and wigs. Students may also attend workshops or perform in an opera production at a senior's home.

Frequently the out-of-school program is an extension of the school opera unit or curriculum. Bullen (1993) described a case where students had a number of opportunities to learn about and understand the opera they were studying, Bizet's *Carmen*. One of these activities involved a trip to a local town where students could experience cultural activities similar to that of Seville, the city where the opera being studied was set. The students were also given a short course on Spanish visual art and asked to compare some of the pieces with the music of the opera composers. The schools were then given video tapes of the opera *Carmen* as well as another video tape introducing them to Spanish art and bull fighting. Mann (1984) noted that the San Francisco Opera Company also invited students from area schools to their live opera productions.

Some students in the United States have been fortunate enough to attend live opera and learn about it from first-hand experience. Some of these students become so interested in the opera that they decide to pursue it further by attending programs either organized by the community opera group or by the opera company. These programs may be held after school, or on weekends.

Community Opera Programs. One community program described by Ruffer (1990) involved adults and students in the production of an opera. The opera had been planned for two years, and the ideas were developed by groups of students from four secondary schools in the area. Since the time schedule was limited, only two performing arts groups of 22 students each were allowed to participate. Three of the schools supplied a chorus of children, townsmen, and tradespeople. A group of boys representing smugglers on the beach effectively

integrated movement, drama, and music to the rhythmic music. One notable feature was that there were no auditions for the chorus. As this was a community venture, participants were encouraged to make contributions to the composition in order to share ownership of the music. The opera was tailored to the capabilities of the participants and, according to Ruffer, resulted in a wonderful performance.

Bullen (1993) described how an out-of-school community program made connections with the local schools by producing videos of their experiences. The objective was to bring back the videos about their opera experiences to their schools and share the information with other students. This activity was initiated when the artistic director from the Sarasota Opera Company met with students to form a Junior Opera Guild (JOG). The members of JOG received special privileges as they

toured and worked backstage, attended vocal coaching sessions and blocking rehearsals, spoke with performers, stage crew, and company staff members, and even sat in the orchestra pit during a final dress rehearsal. JOG character members were invited to two performances...and were asked to interview the 1992 performers...with the objective of making a video to be used in introducing the operas to middle school and high school classrooms. (p. 36)

Bullen believes that the community programs have provided a service and opportunity to the student interested in learning more about opera. Learning about opera in an atmosphere where others share the same enthusiasm provides an enriching experience for the student participants.

Response to Opera Education Programs. Opera education programs, including live performances for or by students, whether in or out of school, are still not the norm for all schools. In many cases either going to the opera or presenting one is a unique first time experience for students and participating adults in the programs. Because opera performances are not as common or as popular as attending a movie or a theatre, it is very interesting to note the reactions of the students and the level of enjoyment they receive from their experience. The positive response is similar across the 4 decades

represented in the literature in this section.

As part of a pilot project, Caldwell (1967) ensured that all children had a great deal of preparation before each opera they saw over the duration of the opera season. The children were stimulated and prepared to produce their own opera from all the things they had learned and experienced.

Drago (1993) shared the final response of one of her students when her opera course was completed:

The whole experience of learning to appreciate opera was beyond all expectations. I can't wait to go to an opera and use what I know. Now I know how to prepare so that I can really enjoy and appreciate it. I also feel I can talk about it to others in an intelligent way, I ended up learning so much, and a true testimony to my growing love for opera was the fact that I never missed one opera class! (p. 68)

The Bay area opera outreach program in San Francisco measured the success of presenting opera based on the reaction of their audiences (Mann, 1984). After watching the opera, singers and students share the stage together in a performance, a 10-year-old student from the school said: "They made it interesting for children, and you realize opera is not really boring. I liked the high voices. They were real neat" (p. 59). Another student watching Bizet's *Carmen* put on by the Palo Alto's Scholar Opera Company said: "I've never seen an opera before. It was especially fun to meet the performers and ask them questions afterward" (p. 56).

Koppenhaver (1979) shared his experience as the composer and director of the opera, *A Piano Comes to Arkansas*, which was performed for the first time in the schools with his new ensemble. His reaction to the opera presentations was that "the experience was overwhelming. In many schools the children asked when we were coming back with more operas. After our experience with this, we will be back as soon as we write the next one" (p. 43).

Bullen (1993) shared students' reactions following the Sarasota Opera company performance of *Carmen*. The students "simply exuded enthusiasm and excitement for the work they were doing. Studying *Carmen* was fun, and opera was there for everyone" (p. 38).

Following the school performance of the mini version of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* presented by the Cleveland Opera company, Kleinman (1990) noted the audience's response. He reported that the community was amazed, and for most people in attendance, this was the first time they had ever heard an opera. The result was that more students enrolled in the music program afterwards and students began to want to improve their vocal qualities. The students were less inhibited on stage, and the whole choral program was enhanced. Many students were eager to attend a live professional opera.

La Valley (1977) shared the success story of how two Manhattan schools spent three months preparing an opera that involved parents making costumes and building props for the school production. It was a huge success, and subsequently, student participation in the project doubled. After this, the Manhattan schools encouraged one more school in their district to perform an opera, and eventually three schools were performing in a production together as part of an anniversary project. As a result of their involvement, some students were eager to study professionally as performers or production crew. It was noted by La Valley that the cooperation and organization for all the school productions yielded success stories.

Hannahs (1975) described the response to Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, presented for the students:

When the curtain went down, the never forgotten rewards came from the tumultuous applause. Now, with the performance receding away into memory, the realization that a worthwhile achievement has generated new project ideas for the future. Our operatic adventure is not over, it is just beginning. (p. 76)

The Opera on the Pier program reported the following success: "The project has enthused and inspired literally hundreds of people and has generated a new community opera group with hopes to launch itself again" (Ruffer, 1990, p. 74).

Wignall (1988) had his students study Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* every week in music class in order to prepare for their own upcoming presentation of the opera for the school. The response proved to be positive as the initial difficulties of interesting children in opera soon vanished. Also, parents became eager to know

more about opera as they watched the professional production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* on video at home with their children.

The Metropolitan Opera Studio toured 30 schools in the area and found that some of the students were surprised at how much they enjoyed the performance (Tatum, 1983). The Metropolitan Opera Studio discovered on their tour that 95% of students had never heard an opera before their visit, including schools that were known for their great music programs. The Opera Studio was concerned and asked why this was the case. They learned that some operas were too deep for students and realized there were many other operas that tell a story that would be more suitable for older children. Their parents and teachers must have sensed this difficulty and chose not to expose children to the productions.

Bessom (1979) commented on the choice of opera repertoire presented by the opera ensembles for the schools and revealed that 90% of the sponsoring opera companies preferred to have the classics performed for children. Perhaps the classics were chosen because they were more identifiable and perhaps more recognizable by children. Bessom thought it was important for students to know "the names and sounds of Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, and Verdi." He suggested that students could identify with the real life situation of Rossini's *Barber of Seville* and the human conflict and passion of Verdi's *Aida*. Most of the school presentations were based on either a "story with excerpts" or a "what is opera" approach to their program (p. 33).

It is interesting to review the responses to an opera by students, especially when it was their first exposure. In many of the cases, the children demonstrated that they would like to learn more about opera. As opera education continues to be introduced to children, it also faces numerous challenges if students are to have meaningful music experiences.

Challenges to Opera Education in the United States

Many of the issues and challenges facing opera education concern providing quality opera education for students today. With these challenges come short term solutions, long term solutions, failures, and, in many cases, solutions that have yet to

be created.

How is it that only certain students get a chance to become familiar with the arts, particularly opera, and others do not get any exposure? There are clearly inequities for children. How are the touring opera groups able to visit so many schools in an area in a given time period? How do teachers find out about opera resources and get training in the field if the board-wide music coordinators and consultants are so short of staff, or no longer exist? Other issues also exist such as the availability of touring companies, the training of teachers, and the lack of sufficient resources.

The public image of opera is also a problem. Bessom (1979) reflected upon the stigma opera has carried: "It was commonly viewed as exotic, elitist, and extravagant—a plaything of wealthy families and urban sophisticates. Many music teachers were either overawed or repelled by its theatrical side and found it hard to integrate with other, purer music genres" (p. 30).

Hannahs (1975) claimed that even though the popularity of performing an opera had increased, it was still viewed by teens and adults in a stereotypical manner. It's often looked at as "screaming by a lot of overstuffed females with unintelligible actions" (p. 75). When Hannahs considered this general attitude towards opera, he wished he could relay what opera really is about. In his view, opera is the most exciting and glamorous music. He concluded that the only way to defeat such negative attitudes was to actually produce an opera with students so they could experience it for themselves. He suggested that if he could do it as a classroom teacher, any teacher could without feeling intimidated.

With regard to the problem of opera stereotyping, Hostetter (1979) wrote: "Teachers who have avoided teaching opera for fear of having to deal with negative stereotypes are missing the opportunity to expand their students' visual and dramatic perception" (p. 77).

Block (1971) found other challenges when putting on a short operetta like Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*, such as finding a workable script, affordable and workable scenery, and someone to provide simple choreography. The good part

was that the spoken parts were learned in less time than anticipated, as were the 10 songs. Because Block wanted his students to learn by doing, he found the students a little young to handle some of the responsibilities. Therefore, the students required a lot of guidance and supervision, which did reap rewards in the end. For example, the lights were controlled by a 7-year-old girl, and the stage management was conducted by an 8-year-old boy who learned a lot about production.

Hannahs (1975) discovered that there were other performance issues involved with student presentations. Because the choice of opera was a big consideration when deciding to have students perform, the idea of presenting Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, made sense; nobody could ever say that the music had doubtful qualities. The real problem or challenge came into play when he discovered that *The Marriage of Figaro* demanded a certain vocal range and technique that was difficult for the children to sing. He made two decisions: to have the recitatives spoken rather than sung and have some of the set pieces omitted.

Bessom (1979) discussed the lack of teacher training in opera education and suggested ways of assisting teachers with the needed knowledge when they were planning their opera units, noting there were opportunities to receive either one-day seminars or full courses on opera education at a university, college, or institute such as The Lincoln Center Institute in the United States.

Finally, presenting new and suitable repertoire to which student audiences could relate posed a challenge. Koppenhaver (1979) claimed that it is most unfortunate that "only a handful of new American operas are being performed in any given year in America" (p. 43). Koppenhaver thought that performers were definitely missing the opportunity to show their operas to welcoming school audiences.

Caldwell (1967) claimed that money was a big issue for sustaining opera in America and, as Artistic Director of the National Opera Company, discovered opera producers were essentially fund raisers, keenly interested in producing an audience before it was too late. Caldwell was also interested in the future growth of opera in the United States and believed that if a national company grew stronger, many small

regional companies would grow and take root in the various cities across America.

Although all these challenges were identified over 30 years ago, the issues, as will become evident in chapters 4 through 7, persisted at least until 1990. Interestingly, I found no articles critical of opera education. Instead, the literature presented stories of enthusiastic attempts to implement opera education in classrooms by teachers and opera companies. The education referred to typically involved students in doing opera, going to the opera, or learning about opera. Music literacy (meaning reading music or conceptual learning) was not addressed. Doing opera involved a range of activities (from performing to “composing” operas and from singing to working as a stage hand). There was an attempt to broaden the idea of what opera is by having students compose their own operas on themes relevant to them.

This literature review focused on events in the United States because that country provided the bulk of writing and research. Although there was opera education activity in Canada, there did not appear to have been an interest in publishing accounts of these events.

Opera education challenges continue to exist. They can be looked upon as opportunities to find creative ways of building bridges between the world of opera and the field of education. The United States has demonstrated a commitment to opera education and has provided a backdrop against which to examine opera education in the Province of Ontario, Canada. In the next chapter, I will examine methodological considerations in historical research.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Historical Research

The purpose of this study was to produce a historical account that examines the Canadian Opera Company's role in opera education in Ontario schools from 1950 to 1990. Historical research was used as a way of looking at past problems in an attempt to interpret and make sense of them (Leedy, 1989). Barzun and Graff (1985) wrote that historical research provides a "story of the past facts" (p. 46) and requires "the careful, systematic, reflective, and objective pursuit of information and understanding which adds to human knowledge" (p. 1).

Phelps, Ferrara, and Goolsby (1993) maintain that "the main purpose of historical research reporting was to present a narrative or chronological account of events or persons and places" (p. 288). Rainbow and Froehlich (1987) add that "history as an attempt to understand the past is not just a collection of facts and names" but is a method that researchers use in order to ask specific questions and then "assemble data to answer the questions" (p. 107).

The following research questions were identified for this study as providing useful focuses for the narrative.

1. What was the COC's education mandate since its inception in the 1950s?
2. What was the nature of the COC's education programs and how and why did they evolve over time?
3. What factors helped the COC achieve its educational goals?
4. What factors hindered the COC's education programs?
5. How successful was the COC's education outreach?

These research questions drove the data collection and analysis and are re-examined at the conclusion of the study.

The first part of this research involved the data collection and source verification. Historical research "requires the use of primary sources which provide

eyewitness testimony of an event or that part of the past under consideration” (Colwell, 1992, p. 105). Success in this area depended upon the availability of and access to historical documentation pertaining to the COC’ s history. In order to verify the sources, I had to examine the documents to determine their source and authenticity and seek alternative sources for verification using the guideline recommended by Colwell (1992).

1. Is the handwriting consistent with other identifying marks?
 2. Are there autographs or other identifying marks?
 3. Does the estimated age of the item match the record?
 4. Does any information within the document aid in establishing the missing date?
 5. Are there any indications in diaries, newspapers, programs, or other contemporaneous materials that such an item existed?
 6. Where was the item originally located?
 7. Where is the item now?
 8. Are parts of the document or set of documents missing, illegible, or out of order?
 9. Can an original order or appearance be discovered?
 10. Is this document a variant version or a copy?
 11. Does an original or earlier document exist?
 12. Does the document have multiple authors?
 13. Could this have been written by someone else imitating the purported author’s style?
 14. Is there any reason to suspect that this item may not be genuine?
- (p. 106)

In order to test a documents’ credibility, Colwell (1992) suggested a series of questions. I selected pertinent items.

1. Does the document convey hearsay or direct observation of an event?
2. How much time passed between the observation and the creation of the document?

3. Was the document created merely to record or report, or was there another purpose or intention?
4. Did the writer or speaker have any known biases that might affect the observation?
5. Is there a reason why the writer or speaker might have ignored certain facts?
6. What was the intended audience for this document?
7. Would the observer been more or less candid in relation to another audience?
8. Do other accounts of equally qualified observers agree with this one?
9. Were the writer's training, experience, and knowledge sufficient to support the reliability of the observation? (p. 107).

The principal sources of information were obtained from the *Joan Baille Archives* of the COC located in the Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Centre in Toronto, Ontario. My weekly visits spanned 2 summers of successive visits. The Archivist for the *Joan Baille Archives*, Mrs. Birthe Joergensen, kindly agreed to retrieve files from an enclosed area which shelved Education Files. She brought one to two small boxes at a time containing files with various printed materials regarding the topic requested. The boxes held file folders containing information covering a single year and at other times many years of information or articles based on a topic. Sample labels on the files were: Student brochure, Ensemble school tours, Education budget, Prologue, Prologue French, Ontario Arts Council, and Toronto Arts Council.

My objective was to be thorough and to review as much applicable information as possible to create the large picture and tell a story, even though I had no idea if there was enough worthwhile information in the boxes provided for a "story." As the weeks and months passed, I reviewed other documents such as COC financial reports, COC minutes of the Board of Directors, COC annual reports, COC committee reports, touring reports, flyers, posters, notes, logs, diaries, memos, correspondence letters of the COC General Directors, news

articles, scrap books, student booklets, Prologue for the Performing Arts brochures, opera concert programs, opera concert reviews, COC newsletters, business letters, evaluation or survey forms sent out to schools by Prologue, and various records and reports relating to the artistic and business administration of the company. I also reviewed visual evidence such as photographs of opera productions and related pictures when applicable. At times, I found reviewing the documents to be tedious; yet, the information was extremely interesting since I could relate to the names of singers, opera titles, specific opera productions, and school names from the experiences I had as a teacher, performer, and opera patron.

I also gathered secondary source information from books and journal articles found at the University of Victoria Music. At the University of Toronto I gathered information from the opera and music divisions of University of Toronto Library and the education division of the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education.

I conducted four interviews in the spring of 2003 with selected present or past COC employees such as an educational coordinator, a Prologue performer, and a COC director to verify documents and fill in gaps. All interviewees were asked to answer the five research questions and then respond to a series of semi-structured questions (p. 37) that enabled them to tell their story about the COC's education programs. The interviews lasted between one and two hours.

The first individual interviewed was Mrs. Muriel Smith in March 2003. She is the music library assistant for the COC and has been with the COC for almost 25 years. Before that, she was involved in the out-of-town Ensemble tours as stage manager and van driver. In the 1980s she was the Ensemble's company manager. Smith has been in contact with many of the COC employees and singers over the years and was able to offer interesting insights with her first-hand experiences and memories.

The second interviewee, in March 2003, was Ms. Carrol Anne Curry. She was formerly a performer in COC mainstage productions starting in the 1960s. She also played an active role as a performer in the COC Prologue school productions in the 1960s and 1970s. Presently Curry is the managing director of Dean Artists, a

well known opera talent agency in Toronto. She provided insights about the Prologue programs for children in the 1960s and 1970s. It was exciting to talk with her and hear her stories. I finally got to meet this beautiful lady who had been an inspiration for me in my youth.

The next interview took place in the town of Collingwood with Mrs. Irene Thomas, formerly Irene Wronski, in May 2003. Thomas had served as the COC Ensemble co-ordinator in the 1980s and shared her experiences with me. When I met her, she had a lot of fond memories and enthusiasm for the programs for which she had been responsible. She continues to work in the theatre and presently owns and produces shows with her husband for Theatre Collingwood during the peak tourist season.

The last to be interviewed, in May 2003, was Mr. John Leberg, now retired from the San Francisco Opera company. He began with the COC in 1967 as an assistant production manager and played a vital role with the COC during the 1970s and 1980s as the Director of Operations, a director of specific operas, and right hand man to the General Director at the time, Mr. Lotfi Mansouri. Leberg offered tremendous insight and knowledge of what had transpired in his time. He often questioned the COC's role in education. For example, was it the COC's responsibility to promote education or should it have been the role of the school music programs.

Stake (1995) noted that interview questions should be well planned in advance of the interview and suggested the interviewer become a good listener, take the necessary notes, stay with the main questions, and ask for clarification.

Pre-planned interview questions and rules for interviewing should be constructed from a guideline of useful questions and probes (Phelps, Ferrera, & Goolsby, 1993). Some of the useful questions that can be asked include:

1. Hypothetical questions such as a "what if" phrase
2. Suggestive questions —to elicit open-ended discussion
3. Reason-why questions—to probe the respondent's explanation of an event

4. Qualified yes-no questions— to determine the interviewee's beliefs

The kinds of probes I used included:

1. Clarification
2. *Critical Awareness* —to ask an interviewee to reflect or expand upon an issue
3. Amplification—to draw out more information from the interviewee

The rules and guidelines suggested for interviewing that I used included:

1. Starting the interview by summarizing the purpose of the research and my role as the researcher
2. Using understandable language
3. Using open-ended questions
4. Avoiding asking leading questions
5. Asking one question at a time
6. Using questions asking for the who, when, where, why and how
7. Trying to let the interviewee do most of the speaking
8. Keeping the difficult questions for later in the interview after a rapport has been established with the interviewee
9. At the post interview period, placing quotation marks around the exact words the interviewee said in order to keep them separated from my personal remarks and summary notes. (Phelps, Ferrera, & Goolsby, 1993, p. 172-173)

All interviews were recorded and then transcribed word-for word, even though capturing the meaning of what the interviewee had said was more important than an exact transcript (Stake, 1995). For clarification purposes, interviewees were sent a transcript of the interview by mail and were asked to return it within a 2-week period, marking corrections and additions. Unfortunately, the transcript from Mr. Leberg was not returned. The information was still used since he had clearly consented to have his information used for this thesis. Each interview document ranged from 25 to 45 typed pages. The interviewees' contributions are included at appropriate places throughout the narrative.

The University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Committee granted permission for the research. See Appendix A for the Certificate of Approval, Appendix B for the Recruitment Letter, and Appendix C for the Participant Consent Form.

Since each research question required specific kinds of information and I was dealing with a large quantity of information, I divided the time span of my study into four decades: 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. I sought data that helped answer my five research questions and sub-questions. The answers to the questions provided direction to the historical narrative.

Research Questions and Sub Questions

In the next section I outline the kinds of questions I used for each research question. These questions were based on the literature review.

Research Question 1. What was the COC' s education mandate since its inception in the 1950s?

I looked for evidence of the self-identified education mandates and changes in policy over the four decades examined in this study.

Research Question 2. What was the nature of the COC's education programs and how and why did they evolve over time?

I examined the types of education programs offered to answer the following sub-questions.

- Who was involved?
- Who provided the educational leadership?
- How were the tour groups funded?
- Where did the programs take place?
- How long did the programs run?
- What were the reactions or impressions of the children and artists?
- What programs were offered as pre-opera programs?
- What programs were offered as post-opera programs?

Finding answers to these questions served as the evidence needed to document what occurred decade by decade.

Research Question 3. What factors helped the COC achieve its education goals?

I looked at what the COC had been doing over the decades and tried to find out if they had achieved their goals and what they did to achieve success. The following questions helped focus the inquiry.

- Was there adequate funding?
- Has there been a growing interest in opera in the school programs?
- Have there been additional programs added? If so, what and when?
- Has the marketing and publicity changed and if so, how?
- Were student materials supplied and if so how popular were they?
- Has there been an increase in performances or viewers?
- Are there audio tapes and teachers' packages available?
- Has there been an improvement in the costumes, props, sets, or other factors, for the education program?
- Were any new employees hired to help with opera education?
- Did the change in COC facilities foster growth for the education program?
- Have the COC archives facilitated progress or change of any sort?
- Have any political, social, or economical factors affected achievement of goals in the Province of Ontario?

Research Question 4. What factors hindered the COC's education programs?

A series of initial questions was generated and I categorized the answers into sections about each decade. I began with the stated goals and analyzed the evidence to conclude to the best of my knowledge what had caused the problems and hindered programs. Questions included:

- Was there inadequate funding? Was it an issue?
- Were there personnel problems?
- Were there communication problems between the COC and schools?
- Did programs or specific operas lack popularity?

-Why were some schools not interested?

-Were there any economical, social, or political issues that arose?

Research Question 5. How successful was the COC's education outreach over the 40 years in this study?

What were the COC's definition of success and criteria for determining/ measuring it?

-Was success judged by the number of shows?

-Was success judged by the number of students as audience?

-Was success an issue of funding?

-Was success judged by the number of employees?

-Was success judged by the reactions of the students, teachers, or parents?

In conclusion, I relayed the facts chronologically to answer the research questions and tell the story from all identified sources according to each decade. I tried to relay the facts as they emerged from the data in a narrative form that would be of interest to readers: "Above all, historical research must be born in a spirit of inquiry. The doing of it as well as the product itself must contribute to the pleasure as well as the enlightenment of the reader and researcher alike" (Colwell, 1992, p.111).

The many reports, flyers, correspondences, and so on referred to in this history are carefully cited in the text but not included in the References. However, I encountered difficulties in the *Joan Baille Archives* where various newspaper articles and pictures were located. Pictures had often been cut from an original paper and were missing an exact date or newspaper name, and articles were found loose in a file folder stored in a secured box, often without detailed reference. As a result I was not able to reference all the material such as publicity flyers, posters, and student booklets. They are all available in the *Joan Baille Archives*.

In chapter 4 through 7, I report on the historical documentation available from the *Joan Baille Archives* and oral history as recounted in the four interviews. My critical comments on events are found in chapter 8. The next chapter addresses the start of the student opera presentations and identifies intrepid leaders who provided the vision and determination to carry forward opera education in Ontario schools during the 1950s.

CHAPTER FOUR

The 1950s

This chapter examines a new approach to opera programming for students that surfaced in two major developments during the 1950s. The first development began in 1956 with the first documented student opera dress rehearsal performance. The second development involved the collaborative efforts of Mr. Geiger-Torel, General Director of the Opera Festival Association; Mr. Chalmers, Chairman of the Opera Festival Association; and Dr. Johnson, President of the Ontario Music Educators Association, who formed an alliance between the Toronto School Board in Ontario and the Opera Festival Association.

Initiation of Performances for Students

Although the Opera Festival Association of Toronto was first established in 1950, it was not until the early part of 1956 that the dress-rehearsal for high school students, *Don Giovanni*, was selected and presented at the Royal Alexandra Theatre. The show had been organized by the Opera Festival Association of Toronto under the leadership of Mr. Geiger-Torel, General Director, and Mr. Ernest Rawley, General Manager of the Royal Alexandra Theatre. According to Rawley, "it was agreed that 50 cents should be charged for tickets to the high school rehearsal performance. It was left up to Rawley to continue or discontinue the 50 cent discount on matinee performances to accredited students" ("General Manager's Report," March, 1956).

The response to the student performance was first documented at the Annual General Meeting for members by President VanValkenburg:

An innovation this year was the introduction of dress-rehearsal performances for high school students at especially low prices. The students had received some preliminary musical training in the schools and responded to the performance with great enthusiasm. Receipts for this performance were slightly in excess of expenses. Dr. Boyd Neel provided effective and entertaining comment which added to the enjoyment of the audience. Thank you Dr. Neel. ("Report of President

of Executive Committee," November 21, 1956)

Dr. Neel was the Dean of the Royal Conservatory of Music at the time.

On June 11, 1957, a Report by the President of the Executive Committee to the Annual General Meeting was presented by VanValkenburg concerning the Eighth Annual Opera Festival which had been held at the Royal Alexandra Theatre from February 25th to March 9th, 1957:

The Annual Opera Festival once again proved itself an outstanding event in the musical and theatrical life of Toronto. *Hansel and Gretel* proved a great attraction particularly to children, and was well attended with 85% of capacity for four performances. ("Report of President of Executive Committee," June 11, 1957)

At the November 1957 Executive Committee meeting when plans were being made to select operas for the 1958 Opera Festival Fall Season, Geiger-Torel suggested that "*Hansel and Gretel* might be substituted" for another opera being considered "or a production of *H.M.S. Pinafore* by Tyrone Guthrie." However, in the year following at the June 1958 Executive Committee meeting, Geiger-Torel responded to an unnamed committee member who asked if there were any student performances planned for the 1958 season:

As the response from teachers last year had been negligible, and little help had been forthcoming from the Board of Education, they had been discontinued. It was suggested that Wednesday matinees at reduced prices for students with credentials from the Royal Conservatory might be arranged. ("Report of President of Executive Committee," November, 1957)

Education and Opera Festival Association Collaborate

Although the student opera had been canceled in the 1958 season, plans were underway to promote a student opera for the 1959 season. It is in the Minutes of the March 23, 1959, Board Meeting that the first documented evidence of the Women's Committee's interest and involvement with the student dress rehearsal appears. Mrs. Godfrey, the President of the Women's Committee, reported that "Dr. Richard Johnson, President of the Ontario Music Teacher's Association was most enthusiastic about Secondary School children attending the opera, and

recommended that seats be made available through the schools" ("Minutes" from Opera Festival Association Board Meeting, March 23, 1959). The board members of the Opera Festival Association then decided that student tickets would be sold for \$1.00 for the second balcony seats instead of the usual cost of \$1.50 and would be made available for every performance.

The Women's Committee agreed to have Johnson attend and speak at a dinner planned to help unite music teachers from the School Boards of Education with the opera company. Godfrey announced that music teachers and Superintendents from the local Toronto School Boards had also been invited to a special dinner sponsored by the O'Keefe Centre on March 31, 1959 ("List" of school boards, teachers, and superintendents, March, 1959. Seventy-one high school music teachers and superintendents were invited to hear Chalmers, Chairman of the Opera Festival Association of Toronto, Geiger-Torel, General Director, and Johnson speak about promoting student operas. The leadership of these three men was the catalyst needed to unite the Toronto and surrounding Boards of Education with the Opera Festival Association of Toronto. The Women's Committee Report of May 1959 said the committee was

most grateful to the O'Keefe Centre for enabling them to entertain the Ontario Music Educators at dinner during the Easter holidays. Over 60 music teachers from schools throughout Ontario came to hear Mr. Chalmers and Mr. Torel talk about opera plans for next season. The assent of the Board to the suggestion of the ticket committee that we have \$1.00 tickets for all students was important to the success of this student programme. ("Women's Committee Report," May 11, 1959)

Fortunately most of the representatives from the School Boards who had attended the dinner were receptive to the speeches and willing to organize student attendance at the opera productions. With the process set in motion, Geiger-Torel wrote a letter to the Superintendents of the School Boards, some of whom had attended the Ontario Music Educator's dinner, inviting high school students to the dress rehearsal of *The Barber of Seville*, which was to be held on October 14, 1959 at 4:00 p.m. at the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto.

Geiger-Torel, in his role as leader and correspondent with the schools,

responded by letter to Mrs. Robert Leeper at St. Joseph's High School in Barrie, Ontario about her students' visit to *The Barber of Seville*. He sent his regrets that he was not able to find a speaker who would go to the city of Barrie to talk to the students about the opera they were coming to see:

I daresay this does not represent a catastrophe as we produce this opera in English and the plot is extremely easy to understand. I am terribly sorry and I hope that in the future we will be able to line up speakers for this purpose. I shall try my very best to persuade the theatre authorities at the Royal Alexandra to reserve sixty seats for your students. (Letter to Leeper from Geiger-Torel, September 23, 1959)

In his second letter to Leeper, on October 2, 1959, Geiger-Torel told her that the parents of the students could come to the performance for the same price of \$1.00 as long as there was a limited number of adults. Again he reminded her that the seats for the performance were not reserved and suggested she arrive early with her students in order to get good seats (Letter to Leeper from Geiger-Torel, October 2, 1959).

As a result of Geiger-Torel's leadership, the student opera, *The Barber of Seville* held on October 1959, was rated a success with a total of 1,393 students attending from 30 schools. Judging by the positive student and teacher responses, the teachers also thought the performance was a success. Mr. Lloyd Bradshaw, the music teacher at Forest Hill Collegiate and editor of *The Recorder*, the journal of the Ontario Music Educators Association, responded by letter to Geiger-Torel:

Most interesting letter. 130 students from my school attended the student matinee, and loved it. It was the first time for most of them, often since they have made a point of telling me it will not be the last. All 130 students agreed that the performance was worth more than the admission price and the matinee was a success. (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Bradshaw, October 20, 1959)

On November 6, 1959 the Northern Secondary Glee Club President, Mr. R. E. Norton, also sent a letter of appreciation to Geiger-Torel stating that the show had been a "rewarding experience" for all of his students. "It was for some a formal introduction to the legitimate opera. For others it was another addition to the operas they have seen and enjoyed. It is one that will remain in our memory for a long time!"

Norton then requested an invitation to future operas.

The Women's Committee was delighted by the success of their initiative.

Godfrey, President of the Women's Committee, reported:

Our student performance which was largely arranged by Mr. Torel at the instigation of the Women's Committee was a complete and enthusiastic sell-out. Two student performances are planned for the beginning of the Festival in the autumn when *The Marriage of Figaro* will be sold through the schools at a special price of \$1.00. ("Women's Committee Report," June, 1960)

Based upon his recollection of the 1950s concerning his attempts to bring together the School Boards with the Opera Festival Association of Toronto in his published review, "The Coming of Age," Geiger-Torel recalled:

At first it was very hard to convince teachers, principals and supervisors to cooperate. I vividly remember meetings held at the old Royal Conservatory of Music on College Street at the corner of University Avenue, when the first plans were made by Toronto's music supervisor Harvey Perrin, Ettore Mazzoleni and myself. It is difficult to believe that at the time there were actually some *music* teachers who dismissed as rubbish anything composed after Handel's *Messiah*. To persuade these educators to send their pupils to so low-brow an aberration of music as an opera performance was an arduous task. Even with those, perhaps less narrow-minded, it was equally hard to obtain assistance in the selling of the tickets to their students. After an initial struggle of four years our efforts started to pay off. (Geiger-Torel, 1975)

Conclusion

In the 1950s, the factors which contributed to opera education for students evolved in the form of student performances (dress rehearsals) under the leadership of Geiger-Torel, Johnson, Chalmers, and the volunteers of the Opera Festival Association of Toronto Women's Committee. Geiger-Torel functioned as a strong advocate for opera and opera education. Although a clear statement of the purpose of opera education was never formulated at this time, the Opera Festival Association of Toronto continued presenting student concerts and forged a working relationship with the local School Boards that would allow opera education to go forward into the 1960s.

CHAPTER FIVE

The 1960s

The new decade was filled with optimism for the Opera Festival Association of Toronto, which became the Canadian Opera Company (COC) at the start of the decade. The COC's move to the O'Keefe Centre in 1961 brought at least double the seating capacity and the good news that the COC deficit was down to \$9,060. The box office receipt revenues rose to 63% from 44% during the 1960-1961 season.

The 1960s were also years of optimism for student programming as these programs slowly continued to evolve, amid many setbacks. Nevertheless, in the absence of a clearly stated mandate regarding opera education for students, each committee assigned to student programs set its own goals and objectives, while adhering to the guidelines and objectives of the COC.

Specific key factors fostering either growth or roadblocks related to student opera education programs will be examined in this chapter. The questions are: How did each of the programs evolve, and how did certain events either contribute or hinder the evolution of opera education for students? The answers to these questions will be found through examining four initiatives that characterized the decade:

1. secondary and junior high school student opera performances
2. opera performances for elementary children
3. COC links with the Ontario Music Conference and arts organizations
4. COC educational extension—Initiation of Prologue to the Performing Arts

In the 1960s Herman Geiger-Torel remained the General Director for the COC. Other leaders involved with the opera programs for students were Richard Johnson and Keith Bissell, Metropolitan Toronto school board superintendents; key members of the Women' Committee such as Mrs. John Godfrey, Mrs. Russell T. Payton, Mrs. Robert Ledger, Mrs. Arthur A. Kennedy, Mrs. P.G. Klotz, and Miss Irene Bartello; key members of the Junior Women's Committee such as Mrs. Derek

Osler, Mrs. Rodney Anderson, Mrs. Wm. E. MacLatchy, Mrs. Donald P. Dowd, and Mrs. Gwen Vernon; and the Prologue to the Performing Arts Committee consisting of Mrs. Anderson as Chairman and Mrs. George Bishop as Vice Chairman.

Secondary and Junior High Student Opera Performances

At the start of the decade, the Women's Committee, also known as the WOC, continued its varied tasks from the late 1950s of raising money for the COC by selling tickets, maintaining public relations, providing student scholarships for Royal Conservatory of Music Opera School students, and assisting Geiger-Torel with the secondary school dress rehearsal opera performances produced by the COC and performed at either the Royal Alexandra Theatre or the new O'Keefe Centre.

In the first few months of 1960, the WOC had already been making plans for two student opera matinee performances to be performed in the autumn of 1960; the one 1959 performance had been a sell-out success. Student matinees of *Othello* and *The Marriage of Figaro* were planned for October 10th and 11th, 1960. Geiger-Torel was in charge of contacting school board superintendents and extending invitations to the student performance for the discounted price of \$1.00.

In order to encourage ticket sales, Geiger-Torel first contacted Mr. J.R.H. Morgan, Superintendent of Secondary Schools for the Board of Education for the City of Toronto (Letter to Morgan from Geiger-Torel, February 9, 1960). Morgan granted his formal approval "in principle" along with his authorization to contact Mr. Harvey Perrin, Supervisor of Music for the Board of Education for the City of Toronto (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Morgan, February 16, 1960). Geiger-Torel then contacted Perrin and enclosed a copy of the letter that had been sent to him from Morgan (Letter to Perrin from Geiger-Torel, March 2, 1960).

Geiger-Torel also wrote letters to other School Boards inviting them to attend the student matinee which was to be held in October 1960 (Letters to East York Board of Education, Lakeshore District Board of Education, Board of Education for the Township of Etobicoke, the Scarborough Board of Education, the Forest Hill Board of Education, the Board of Education of the Town of Leaside, the Board of

Education for the Township of York, and the Weston Board of Education from Geiger-Torel, March 2nd, 1960). In response, Mr. R.G. Taylor, Superintendent of Secondary Schools for the Board of Education of East York provided a positive reply (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Taylor, March 8, 1960). Mr. Gillespie, Superintendent of the Lakeshore District Board of Education also provided a positive response (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Gillespie, March 9, 1960). Each of the superintendents who responded gave Geiger-Torel permission to contact specific secondary schools regarding student opera performances. Gillespie's letter listed both the name of the principal and the contact teacher for each school. Mr. T. D. Boone, Superintendent of Secondary Schools for the Board of Education for the Township of Etobicoke also granted permission for student attendance (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Boone, March 10th, 1960). The response from Mr. A. E. Robinson, Superintendent of Secondary Schools for the Scarborough Board of Education, not only included a list of principals and music teachers but said: "I am pleased to signify my approval of this. The interest of the Canadian Opera Company in the secondary students of Metro is commendable and on behalf of those in Scarborough, I wish to convey our sincere thanks" (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Robinson, March 22, 1960). Mr. W. E. Abray, the Principal of Forest Hill Collegiate from the Forest Hill Board of Education also commended the COC:

Mr. Graham has given me your letter of March 2, 1960. Your proposal as outlined is a most ambitious one. Since the Student Matinee was so successful this year there seems to be little doubt that two performances will meet the same student approval. The Board of Directors is to be congratulated for making opera available to our young music students. We shall again lend our support to next year's endeavour. May I wish you all the success. (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Abray, 1960)

The letter from Abray was not dated.

Another reply to Geiger-Torel from Mr. M.W. Holmes, Superintendent of Public Schools for the Board of Education of the Town of Leaside, was unfortunately not as positive as the earlier replies had been: "The matter has been discussed with the Principal of the High School and the Vice Principal. Although they commend the

Canadian Opera Company highly for its interest, they feel they do not want to cooperate at this time" (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Holmes, March 28, 1960).

However, Mr. Rutherford, Superintendent of Secondary Schools for the Board of Education for the Township of York, responded positively to Geiger-Torel's request and said that the music teachers would promote the performances by the sale of tickets in their schools: "I consider the work that the Canadian Opera Company is performing a very commendable one and deserving of support" (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Rutherford, April 6, 1960). The Weston Board of Education also responded positively to Geiger-Torel's request when Mr. Marchant, Secretary-Treasurer and Business Administrator, said: "I have been directed to advise that the Weston Board of Education has given formal approval to your request" (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Marchant, June 3, 1960).

Geiger-Torel wrote another letter to each of the superintendents, extending his initial invitation to include students of grades 7 and 8 who attended junior high schools (Letter to school board superintendents from Geiger-Torel, June 17, 1960). Some of the responses gave permission with a list of the principals and music teachers while other boards said that they either didn't have junior high schools or were just not able at that time to offer the program to their students.

Other than the inability to offer a program to some junior high students, as well as the problem of the long correspondence time between the COC and the school boards to confirm tickets, one more difficulty arose. Geiger-Torel sent a letter of regret to Mr. T.H.W. Martin, Superintendent of Public Schools for the Board of Education for the City of Toronto, to inform him that since opera tickets were not allowed by his Board to be sold through the music teachers at the public schools, he couldn't find a suitable way to have the tickets available to the students of grades 7 and 8, as was part of the original plan: "If we start to sell tickets through our office, I fear that a very dangerous confusion in our organization could possibly jeopardize the entire set-up of these special student performances" (Letter to Martin from Geiger-Torel, August 30, 1960).

On the other hand, Mr. C.L. Bird, Chairman of the Ledbury Park Junior High

School Music Department sent a letter to Geiger-Torel saying his students were most appreciative of being invited. He enclosed a money order for 81 tickets, and his response was documented as the only school that had written a paragraph to explain and share how students were being prepared for the upcoming student matinee. In closing, Bird requested illustrative material about *The Marriage of Figaro* to be sent to his school so that it could be used for display purposes around the school (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Bird, September 22, 1960). Geiger-Torel's reply was: "We are very pleased that your school will be so well represented at the performance. I have contacted a member of the Canadian Opera Women's Committee who is forwarding two posters and a package of brochures to you. Thanking you for your interest" (Letter to Bird from Geiger-Torel, September 28, 1960).

Besides instructing the WOC to send out posters and brochures, Geiger-Torel also suggested how the WOC could assist with student performances: "They should breakdown schools into cells and assign a woman to each cell. We should then know names of women so that we know which schools they look after" ("Memo" to the Women's Committee from Geiger-Torel, 1960; "General Director's school letters 1960"). The WOC was then recognized for its efforts by Mrs. John Godfrey, the outgoing term WOC President: "We feel that the Women's Committee have done their share during the past year in promoting the cause of opera in Canada" ("Women's Committee Report," June, 1960).

The efforts of the WOC had involved countless volunteer hours. To assist the WOC, a COC Planning Committee had been formed in 1960, and as one of its functions, members were to ensure that the student operas chosen were appropriate for secondary school-age students. A COC Public Relations Committee was also formed to find ways of increasing the size of the audiences at opera performances. The two committees collaborated with the WOC on September 15 1960 to jointly sponsor a public relations meeting which would generate interest in the COC operas and secondary school student dress rehearsals. The meeting, held at the Eaton's Girls' Club was a huge success.

According to Mrs. Russell T. Payton, President of the WOC, out of the 400 people who attended, “somewhere between 60 to 75 of these, and most of them men—were teachers! Think of the schools they represented. The Canadian Opera’s audience of the future” (“Women’s Committee Report,” January 25, 1961).

After the successful meeting in the autumn of 1960, the WOC sponsored *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Othello*. Payton reported on the sold out events:

We did not expect a large turn out for *Othello* for two reasons—we had to have it at a time when it was surprising any of the students would turn up—Thanksgiving Monday, and it is of course an opera much more appealing to grown ups. It is encouraging to know that we should have no difficulty filling the O’Keefe Centre for one Secondary School performance planned for next year. We have the office to thank for a great deal of the work involved. (“Women’s Committee Report,” January 25th, 1961)

She thanked the opera office assistants and recognized the leadership of both Geiger-Torel and Johnson “who gave us invaluable help with the schools, and without whose encouragement we could not achieve the goals we set for ourselves” (“Women’s Committee Report,” January 25, 1961).

The WOC was pleased with the performance results but was concerned with the debt that had been incurred. The WOC realized that offering student discounts in order to entice students to the opera certainly worked but did not cover the costs of the productions. Although *The Marriage of Figaro* had been sold out and many schools had been unable to obtain tickets, a COC deficit remained. She shared the concerns of the committee: “Since the Women’s Committee is basically a ticket selling and audience building group, a large number of our members have been concerned about the future for opera in Canada” (“Women’s Committee Report,” January 25, 1961). More than ever before, the WOC was concerned about how they were going to find extra audiences to fill all the seats of the new O’Keefe Centre.

In *Perspectives* (unknown source), John Kraglund (1960) shared the WOC’s concern and reported that there was a COC “crisis” at hand and that a close assessment of the company’s present and future needed immediate attention: “If

the Company is to survive it must expand. Is it ready to do so and, perhaps more important, are its audiences ready for expansion and sufficiently interested in it?" (p. 29).

The COC followed through on Kraglund's suggestion to expand and grow through the 1961 to 1962 season. The growth began through the visionary leadership of Geiger-Torel and the persistence of the volunteer Women's Committee. In the autumn of 1961 the COC moved from its Royal Alexandra Theatre location into the new O'Keefe Centre in Toronto, and Geiger-Torel reported: "This year 1961 was the crucial year in the existence of our Company. The move to the O' Keefe Centre for the Performing arts was bold, and, considering the results of the season, rewarding" ("General Director's Report," February 13, 1962).

It was also a year of change for the WOC as it began to collaborate for the first time with other arts organizations: "This year also brought a closer relationship with the TSO Women's Committee (Toronto Symphony Orchestra) as we organized our campaign with the schools to take place at the same time, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication, and understandable irritation of teachers and principals" ("Women's Committee Report," February 13, 1962).

In preparation for the one planned secondary and junior high school student performance of *The Bartered Bride*, "Special Student Performance" ticket application forms were sent out to schools on September 1, 1961. Applications were to be returned by Monday, September 25, 1961 and sent to Miss Margot Murray. The application form requested the order date, the teacher's name and signature, the school address and telephone number, and the number of \$1.00 tickets to be ordered. The application stated: "All seats are reserved. Immediate orders are therefore advisable to ensure good seats and prompt attention. One complimentary ticket for the teacher will be added automatically to each ticket order" ("Special Student Performance Order Form," 1961).

There were 42 application forms returned in early September, with the first two dated September 7, 1961. However, the majority were received between September 20 and 22, 1961. The largest single order for 445 tickets was submitted

by Mr. John Wood, Supervisor of Music for the South Peel Board of Education in Port Credit, Ontario on September 21, 1961. Two other large ticket orders came from Lawrence Park Collegiate (252 tickets) and from Northern Secondary School (100 tickets) ("Special Student Performance Order Form," 1961).

Mr. J. O. Walmsley, Music Chairman at Willowdale Junior High School sent a request for tickets on September 20, 1961; a letter from the COC business administrator enclosed 63 standing room tickets at a price of 50 cents each along with a partial refund cheque. The letter said: "I do hope that all your students will enjoy the show and that those who have to stand won't get too tired" (Letter to Walmsley from Geiger-Torel, September 30, 1961).

Miss Margaret Howe, from the Music Department at Bloor Collegiate, wrote a letter to Geiger-Torel on September 22, 1961 along with an order for 35 tickets stating:

We are delighted that the Canadian Opera Company has offered our students such an opportunity, and we only wish that more of them had availed themselves of the privilege. Since that it is the first year that our school has taken part in the student performances, we expect that the enthusiasm that the *Bride* is sure to cause will lead to a much greater interest next year. (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Howe, September 22, 1961)

In summary, Howe said that her school owed a lot to the COC and she wanted to offer her sincere thanks for the invitation.

On Wednesday October 4, at 4:00 p. m., 1961, *The Bartered Bride* was presented for secondary and junior high school students at The O'Keefe Centre for the Performing Arts, located on the corner of Yonge and Front streets. There were 2,300 secondary and junior high school students in attendance along with 900 Wednesday matinee COC subscribers. Unfortunately, 500 secondary students from various schools had already been informed in a memorandum letter dated September 26, 1961 that the requested tickets were unavailable:

Applications for these tickets have been most unexpectedly heavy so we filled them strictly in order of arrival at this office. I am afraid that by the time we came to your order we were completely sold out and therefore regret that we are unable to send you the tickets. Next year we will hope to be able to make different arrangements so that we may accommodate many more students. (Memorandum letter sent to

schools from Geiger-Torel, September 26, 1961)

It was unfortunate that so many students were unable to see *The Bartered Bride*, which was documented as a "tremendous success" ("Board of Director's Meeting," October 30th, 1961).

According to Payton, the high 1961 audience attendance, which included the student matinee, had "surpassed our wildest expectations." She reported that she believed the success was due to the WOC because:

They had already spent many years working at building these audiences and if they let down for a moment, there was a very real chance that opera in Canada would receive the "kiss of death," which so many people predicted in the darker days of 1960. ("Women's Committee Report," February 13, 1962)

Geiger-Torel acknowledged the WOC's help: "I am happy to announce that we shall continue this programme...we shall again organize a matinee of *Madame Butterfly* for students of secondary schools" ("General Director's Report," February, 1962).

Following his announcement, Geiger-Torel commented on the growing interest in opera and believed it had occurred in part because of the previous years of work that had been done in building the COC to its present state:

We are also proud of the fact that our pioneer work of the past 12 years is starting to pay off. Our audiences are growing and the younger generation shows sincere interest in our activities and in opera in general. Corporations and individuals are helping us more than ever to keep afloat – and finally the grants given by the Canada Council, Metro Toronto and the Province of Ontario give enough proof of the fact that they are aware of the importance of the job our Company is doing with the help of our Women's Committee and the Canadian Opera Guild. ("General Directors' Report," February 13, 1962)

Geiger-Torel summarized the future of the COC:

The future looks good and promising. If we can count on the continuous support of all people and authorities which have shown their faith in us in the past, our artists will continue to make opera an important part of Canada's cultural life. ("General Director's Report," February 13, 1962)

Perrin, Director of Music for the Toronto Board of Education, also commended the COC: "The work of the Women's Committee in building young audiences for

opera last year (1961) was appreciated by those of us who are connected with school music. Please be assured of our interest and fullest co-operation" (Letter to the COC from Perrin, "Women's Committee Report," 1962).

The future was, in fact, promising for the 1962 to 1963 season according to George Kidd, of *The Telegram*, who reported on the growth and success of the COC:

At long last Toronto has accepted the Canadian Opera Company, and when it opens its 14th annual season at O' Keefe Centre tonight many of the 15 performances will have been sold out. Opera has taken hold of Toronto. It is a good thing that the Canadian Opera Company, with all its ambitions and dreams for a longer season, faces such an enthusiastic sale. (October, 13, 1962)

Since one student performance of *Madame Butterfly* was to be presented for the secondary and junior high students in October 1962, the COC did not want to discourage the 1,868 potential student ticket holders from seeing a performance, as had happened the year before. As a result, students were also invited to attend a *Madame Butterfly* dress rehearsal instead of the original planned performance for the ticket price of \$1.00 per student. After the performances Geiger-Torel reported that it was "common knowledge that the school performances during this season were tremendously successful" ("General Director's Report," February 4, 1963).

Geiger-Torel also reported that the number of performances for secondary students in the autumn of 1963 would be "increased sharply" since the seasons in the past had been so successful. Two matinee performances of *La Boheme* were to be given for secondary and junior high school students, at an admission price of \$1.00. Geiger-Torel also reported that five touring shows had been performed successfully for secondary and junior high school students in Eastern Canada as well as in Toronto East York centres in the later part of 1962. He then announced that the 1963 COC Eastern tour had already started on January 28th and included two student performances of *Così fan Tutti* in the tour to be presented in the Toronto areas of North York, Scarborough, and East York:

Nine special performances for students are again included in this tour. This figure (9 performances within a total of 43) represents a relatively

high percentage: 21% and proves that our policy to reach our audiences of the future shows promising results. ("General Director's Report," February 4, 1963)

Mr. Frank F. McEachren, COC President, also reported on the tours:

There is sure indication that Opera as an art form is becoming increasingly popular and well recognized by the people of Canada. We are constantly climbing to higher goals, and can either continue to climb or fall down the other side. Next year we will continue the upward climb. (COC "President's Report," February 4, 1963)

Almost one year later, the WOC Committee acknowledged the high level of interest that students had shown towards the opera performances and presented their views at their meeting in January 1964 saying they were pleased with "the increasing interest in opera among our contemporaries and in young children. As we are involved so are our children, and our grandchildren, and surely their youth is enriched by an awareness of some form of the arts" ("Women's Committee Report," January 14, 1964).

At the 1964 Annual meeting Geiger-Torel once again reported on the student performances that had been presented in the autumn of 1963. He noted that the two performances of *La Boheme*, which had been sung in English, were "well sold" and announced that there would only be one upcoming student matinee performance presented on September 30th, 1964 ("General Director's Report," February 13, 1964).

The single student matinee was a "special performance" of *Carmen*, sung in French for a capacity student audience and presented at the O' Keefe Centre on September 30th, 1964 with well known singers such as Jon Vickers, Mignon Dun, and Victor Braun in the starring roles ("General Director's Report," February, 1965).

Nevertheless, within 5 months following *Carmen*, Geiger-Torel reported that he had serious concerns about the future of opera for a student audience:

For the younger generation—that is, to the opera core of the future. If something isn't done *now* in this respect, the composition of our audiences will face stagnation, as far as age is concerned, and eventually might disappear altogether. ("General Director's Report," February 18, 1965)

As a result of this concern, Geiger-Torel explained how he had taken it upon

himself to ask for the assistance of Johnson, a valued COC Board member, to find ways for effective communication and liaison between the COC and the Boards of Education in Metro Toronto, Oshawa, and South Peel County. Geiger-Torel then contacted the different supervisors of music from the boards of education because he believed they were an "important group" and attempted to create an "open exchange of opinions, interesting suggestions and projects" in order to eventually benefit the "younger generation" ("General Director's Report," February 18, 1965).

Unfortunately any direct feedback from the discussions between Geiger-Torel and the music supervisors was not documented in the next year's 1966 "General Director's Report." However, the 1966 "Women's Committee Report" thanked music teachers for their co-operation with the student performances.

Mrs. Robert Ledger, President of the Women's Committee, reported on the 1965 student opera held at the O'Keefe Centre:

A matinee of *Rigoletto* for Secondary School and Junior High School students was so greatly appreciated that the Company was given an ovation by the young people attending. We are most grateful to Mrs. L. Baldwin for organizing this performance, and also wish to express our thanks for the wonderful co-operation afforded us by the music teachers. ("Women's Committee Report," February 3, 1966)

Perhaps the acknowledgment of the music teachers was a result of the renewed communication that had been set up with the School Boards and the collaborative efforts of Geiger-Torel and Johnson in the early part of 1965.

In spite of increased cooperation, the 1966 "General Director's Report" included dismal fiscal news about the student opera presentations:

The financial picture does not look good. Our expenditures have exceeded our estimated figures. It has been impossible to increase the number of student performances at the O'Keefe Centre. The loss is simply colossal due to the very low income (reduced ticket prices of \$1.50 per seat). ("General Director's Report," February 3, 1966)

In a 1966 review titled, "The Director," Geiger-Torel expressed his concerns about offering student opera performances:

More performances should be given for children and students of secondary and junior high schools. If we do not give our young people a chance to hear and see good things at the price of a movie ticket, the

future of the performing arts in Canada will be doomed. The production costs of one performance by the Canadian Opera Company at the O'Keefe Centre amount to approximately \$19,000. The revenue from one student performance at \$1.50 per seat represents \$4,500 and therefore a straight loss of \$14,500!

These facts are pointed out again and again in our briefs to all the respective authorities. They recognize our efforts, but the actual grants which come forward hardly justify giving even **one** student performance. We should produce many more performances for the young people. How can we do this without going bankrupt? (Torel, "The Director," 1966, reference unknown)

Based on Geiger-Torel's newspaper announcement it is questionable whether a student performance was presented in 1966. There is no evidence that one was presented.

Unwilling to give up, Geiger-Torel announced the presentation of a 1967 student opera entitled *The Tales of Hoffman* at a new, higher ticket price of \$2.00 per student ("General Director's Report," February 17, 1967).

A few months later, Mr. Warren Hughes, the COC Business Manager, sent a letter to The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations asking them to advertise *The Tales of Hoffman* in their *Quest* magazine (Letter to The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, May 5, 1967). The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations replied that they would only be able to advertise in a periodical bulletin, since the spring Edition of *Quest* had already been printed (Letter to COC from The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, May 17, 1967).

In an attempt to monitor ticket sales for student operas, a new marketing idea was implemented for the 1967 opera. For the first time documented, an advertising agency, Dye and Durham Ltd., offered its services to produce 20,000 advertising flyers at cost. The flyers were delivered by the WOC to the secondary and junior high schools in Metro Toronto and the Township of Toronto within one week of the school opening in September. On the two-page advertising flyers were large illustrations, a cast list, performance dates, a story synopsis, and an attached return ticket order form which indicated the September 27, 1967 ticket deadline and a "No

Refund” policy. The tickets were available only for students at a cost of \$2.00 each (*Tales of Hoffman* publicity flyer, 1967).

After the flyers had arrived at the schools, a letter was sent to the music and French teachers reminding them that flyers had been sent out along with a two-page synopsis of the upcoming opera. A final note in the letter said: “These student performances have, in the past, been a tremendous success, and the Canadian Opera Company is hoping that, with your help, this Centennial year will be no exception” (Letter to teachers from the Women’s Committee, September (day unknown), 1967).

As part of the monitoring strategy, the WOC convener of secondary school performances, Mrs. Arthur Kennedy provided a “Progress Report.” She claimed that progress had been made: “As the approval was received from the said school boards, the principals of the schools involved were contacted. Most of the letters were sent early in May.” Her report showed that a total of 284 tickets had been sold and sent to teachers by May, 1967. The farthest location with students attending was Barrie H. S., which had ordered 51 tickets. The largest ticket order came from Eastdale C. V. I. located in Oshawa with an order for 73 tickets (“Progress Report: Secondary School Performances,” April 25th, 1967).

Publicity assumed a new look. For the first time, Mrs. John Craine was given permission to produce 15-second spots on the CBC, CHFI, CHUM, and CFRB radio stations. As another way of publicizing *The Tales of Hoffman*, the WOC left flyers in the Toronto and surrounding area libraries. The WOC also advertised *The Tales of Hoffman* in the “Prologue to the Performing Arts” brochure which was sent to schools to solicit their business for another student opera, ballet, and drama series which was to be performed in participating schools.

The *Tales of Hoffman* was held on October 5 and 12, 1967 at 3:30 p. m. for secondary and junior high students. The October 5 performance had 2,485 students in attendance with approximately 20% of the audience from out of town and as far away as New Fane, New York. On October 12, 2,580 students attended with also around 20% of the audience from out of town places as far as Haliburton (“Student

Performances Report,"Women's Committee, 1968).

Nevertheless, in spite of the high number of students in attendance, the COC had two main concerns about the student opera productions. The first one was the 3:30 p. m. start time. Although the Toronto School Boards requested this time because it caused little disruption of the regular school day, the COC found there was little time between the matinee and the evening shows to tear down and or reset for the next opera. The second concern pertained to the COC's operating deficit of \$34,639, pointed out by the COC President, Mr. Air Marshal Curtis who recognized that the 1967 season had been an artistic success, even though the deficit remained a huge concern. He acknowledged at the Annual meeting Geiger-Torel's determination to "produce an opera with a minimum cost and a maximum of artistry. That challenge was met magnificently and resulted in an outstanding contribution to Canadian theatre and opera in particular." Curtis also acknowledged the COC for its hard work over 20 years of development from the early days starting at the Royal Conservatory of Music: "It was not an overnight miracle, but a gradual, often painful, time-consuming process, performed by a few people with immense determination to do their jobs" (COC "President's Report," February 22, 1968).

In an attempt to resolve the problems the COC was facing with student operas, on March 8, 1968, Mr. George T. Heintzman, Chairman of the COC Planning Committee, invited Mr. R. I. Thorman, Comptroller of Finance for the Metropolitan Toronto School Board, to become a member of his committee at the next meeting. Although Thorman was unable to attend because of a prior commitment at the Board of Education office, the planning committee continued to discuss planning and budgeting issues in an effort to determine if the COC could survive another season of student programs. They concluded that the student opera would continue although the difficulties of finance and curtain times remained unresolved. Mr. Baille, a committee member, reviewed the financial problems facing the company and felt that if the 1969 season was not "wisely planned, the company could be facing bankruptcy" ("Planning Committee Report," April 3, 1968).

Geiger-Torel also tackled the problems that were currently being experienced regarding the 3:30 p. m. start time and the financial issues in June 1968. He met the Metropolitan Toronto School Board and the various arts groups in the Toronto area. Each arts group presented their program outlines and future plans while the school boards asked questions and presented their concerns. Geiger-Torel's speech briefly described the different programs that were presently being offered by the COC for school students: "a great many things have been done in the past years for our young people." He described how the junior high school performances had evolved from their start at the Royal Alexandra Theatre in the 1950s and then presented the current problems being encountered with the student programs:

The drawback of these performances is—as far as we are concerned—the late start (3:30 p. m.) which means we have to face an enormously hurried and very costly changeover between student matinees and evening performances. If we are allowed start performances at 2 p.m., the students will love it. Even many teachers may love it too, and we most certainly would love it: because we could save a lot of money, while still losing our shirts! The performance costs about \$25, 000; the revenue from students is about \$6,000. The loss is quite obvious and monstrous. We are willing to continue this program and hope for cooperation. (Speech by Geiger-Torel to meeting of the Toronto School Board and affiliated arts organizations at the Badminton and Racquet Club, Toronto, June 11, 1968)

In the following months Geiger-Torel was also actively involved with other concerns that had arisen around the upcoming 1968 student opera, *Salome*. He liaised with Mrs. Helen Kennedy, WOC convener of the student performances, who had written to him on September 16, 1968 with concerns about the poor response from the schools for the two performances of *Salome*, which had been scheduled for October 1968. She said that some schools had canceled their commitment for *Salome* due to the inappropriate subject matter but the junior high schools at that point were responding better than the high schools. Although many of the high schools, which had brought large groups of students to the opera the year before, had not responded, those who had, indicated they were bringing smaller numbers than in the past. For example, Appleby College had already canceled its ticket

order for *Salome* and had made new plans to attend *La Boheme*, although it wasn't the designated student opera. Helen Kennedy assured Geiger-Torel that she would contact the schools within a week to try and increase ticket sales (Memo to Geiger-Torel from Kennedy, September 16, 1968). In another example, Miss Eleanore Taylor from Barrie District Central Collegiate wrote to the COC requesting reasons for choosing *Salome* as the student opera (Letter to COC from Taylor, September 23, 1968). In reply, Geiger-Torel expressed his thanks for her large order of tickets for *Salome* and then provided three answers to her question:

- 1) Musically and dramatically this work is a masterpiece.
- 2) It is an opera that lasts only one hour and forty minutes, a great asset when considering the very complicated and expensive change-over of shows day by day.
- 3) *Aida* lasts for three and a half hours and could not be considered unless the boards were agreeable to our starting matinees at 2 p.m. instead of 3:30 p.m. (Letter to Taylor from Geiger-Torel, September 30, 1968)

Despite all the concerns that had arisen before the actual production of *Salome*, the two performances continued as scheduled with a total attendance of 2,029 on October 3rd and around 2,400 on October 10, 1968. Twenty-four schools from outside the Metro Toronto area attended, filling around 17.5% of the available seats (Women's Committee, "Student Performances Schedule," 1968).

According to the WOC President, Mrs. P.G. Klotz, success was evident from the standing ovation given at the final performance of *Salome*:

Mrs. Arthur Kennedy and her committee set up a system: Communication with music supervisors and school boards throughout the province—the results of which we cannot begin to assess. Students arrived in droves from such places as diverse as Parry Sound and Buffalo; Mrs. Kennedy did such marvelous things as having an entire busload of children from New York to her home for dinner after the opera. ("Women's Committee Report," February 20, 1969)

Klotz also said that the response letters sent in from the schools following the performance demonstrated how thrilled the students were and how well Geiger-Torel's introduction to *Salome* was in preparing them for the opera presentation ("Women's Committee Report," February 20, 1969).

One of the positive letters received came from Mr. James M. Gayfer, Music director at Southwood Secondary School in Galt, Ontario (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Gayfer, October 12, 1968). Geiger-Torel replied, noting the favourable comments: "We are proud to be able to give young people the opportunity of expanding their knowledge and enriching their future lives. I hope that next season you and your students will again be looking forward to attending" (Letter to Gayfer from Geiger-Torel, November 14, 1968).

Geiger-Torel's response to *Salome* was also positive:

The two performances were very well attended and showed us again that young people are enthusiastically interested in opera as an art form. The revenues remain far below the costs of each performance. Nevertheless, we consider this a good investment. ("General Director's Report," February 20, 1969)

A close watch was kept on the financial situation during the 1967-1968 season while the COC Planning Committee met frequently to discuss budget and future events. Planning committee member, Mr. Kluge, sent Geiger-Torel a letter on November 20, 1968 notifying him that the COC's statement of purpose was to be revisited, and all future COC plans were now to be formulated on a 3- to 5-year basis instead of only 1 year in advance, as had been the custom (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Kluge, November 20, 1968).

Although the changes the Planning Committee made didn't directly or immediately affect student programs, Geiger-Torel still continued to liaise with the schools when necessary. For example, when he responded to a letter to a teacher from Elmira, Ontario, he told her about the upcoming student opera *Turandot*. The teacher replied that she had already contacted Kennedy and planned to bring one or two bus loads of students to *Turandot* for the October 9, 1969 performance. She also explained that her students had already been preparing for the opera (Letter to Geiger-Torel from unidentified Elmira teacher, March 11, 1969).

As well as correspondence with teachers, Geiger-Torel also continued his correspondence with Kennedy, the WOC convener of student operas. On different

occasions Kennedy sent letters to Geiger-Torel to update him about *Turandot* sales. In one of her letters she said that “student performances are attracting more interest than ever before.” She said she had deposited \$400.00 to date from ticket sales tickets and asked Geiger-Torel to review a letter which she had drafted as an invitation to school principals for a planned September opera lecture and social evening (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Kennedy, May 16, 1969).

In a July 1969 letter to Geiger-Torel, Kennedy explained that since mailing costs had increased, she had decided to phone several Toronto schools in an attempt to recruit future students to attend the opera. The phone call was to be followed up with a letter and an attached order form sent to all school principals. She had “contacted several of the Toronto schools by telephone but had no response.” Ticket sales to date were twice what they had been at the same time last year: “In addition to the actual sales there has been considerable interest shown from new areas that will be coming to the student opera for the first time.” Kennedy added that she also contacted the music and English school co-ordinators in “case the principal neglected to do so.” She said her volunteers were creating opera displays at the local libraries and then suggested that teachers should be invited to a working rehearsal of *Turandot*, an offer which was ultimately declined. Finally, she suggested that *Turandot* should be promoted in the adult opera subscription brochure to inform interested parents of the student opera price of only \$2.00 per student. Kennedy demonstrated her dedication to student operas as she concluded: “If you have any suggestions please advise me or if there are any more materials for our library desk I will be only too happy to attend at the office to obtain the same” (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Kennedy, July 22, 1969).

Miss Irene Bartello, assistant Convener of student performances, also wrote a letter to Geiger-Torel in July 1969 and explained how she had been assisting Kennedy. She told Geiger-Torel that she had planned to send original typewritten letters all individually addressed along with an enclosed *Turandot* story-synopsis or resume, to approximately 100 different newspapers, radio, and TV stations: “We hope to have the letters in the mail during the first week of August. I trust that our

efforts and our letter and resume will meet with your approval" (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Bartello, July 17, 1969).

As a result of the WOC's tireless efforts, Puccini's *Turandot* was successfully sold out for the October 2nd and 9th, 1969 performances: "over 6,000 students were exposed to the magic world of opera" ("Women's Committee Report," February 12, 1970).

In response to *Turandot*, Mr. Barron, the Assistant Head of Music at Lawrence Park Collegiate, shared his observations and suggestions in a letter to Mrs. Philip Klotz, President of the Women's Committee saying how much he had appreciated the efforts of the Committee in sponsoring *Turandot*:

Young people, obviously, need exposure to opera if they are to understand and appreciate it. First, I criticize some of my colleagues for not adequately preparing the students and for not disciplining them properly during the performance. It was deplorable that this situation occurred. I criticize the management of the O'Keefe Center very strongly for allowing candy to be sold not only at intermission but also during the performance itself. Many younger students were running back and forth all through the performance. This distraction could have been easily eliminated. (Letter to Klotz from Barron, October 14, 1969)

In closing, Mr. Barron also suggested that the COC try a different format to include a "very exciting half-hour demonstration of how an opera is put together" (Letter to Klotz from Barron, October 14, 1969)

Another response was sent to Geiger-Torel from Mr. James M. Gayfer, Music Director at Southwood Secondary School in Galt. He wrote that he had 110 of his students attend the opera on October 2nd: "We all enjoyed it thoroughly, particularly Richard Cassily's fine tenor, and many thought it even better than *Salome* or *The Tales of Hoffman*. Thank you and the Company again for a thrilling spectacle and overall performance" (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Gayfer, October 8, 1969).

Geiger-Torel replied to Gayfer expressing his appreciation for the comments about *Turandot* and the trouble he had taken in writing his letter of appreciation: "To hear that your students and staff so much enjoyed the opera is most rewarding to us" (Letter to Gayfer from Geiger-Torel, November 12, 1969).

Following the success of *Turandot*, Geiger-Torel sent a letter to Kennedy and her committee commending them for their efforts:

The job done by yourself and the members of your committee was truly excellent, deserving the greatest appreciation from our Board and the Executive staff of our Company. For now, please accept my most sincere congratulations on a very successful project and again my warmest thanks for all you have done to make the project a bigger success year by year. (Letter to Kennedy from Mr. Geiger-Torel, November 4, 1969)

According to Mrs. Edith Patterson, reporting for Klotz at the Annual Meeting, the WOC again demonstrated its commitment to student operas:

Students who learn early in life to become good listeners, who learn to love good music, who find joy in appreciation of all the arts, are on their way to becoming well adjusted adults. And towards this goal, all the members of the Canadian Opera Women's Committee pledge their united support. ("Women's Committee Report," February 12, 1970)

But opera was not only being made available to secondary students. Elementary students were also able to reap the benefits.

Opera Performances for Elementary Children

Along with the WOC which sponsored the junior and secondary school operas, the affiliated Junior Committee members, known as the Junior Women's Committee (Jr. WOC) or Junior League (ages 35 years or younger) were the first to nurture a growing interest in opera performances for primary school children. The concept of involving younger children was introduced in 1961 when Mrs. Russell T. Payton, President of the WOC announced: "We know that the League is sponsoring one matinee performance next season, adding the Primary Schools to our list of listeners" ("Women's Committee Report," January 25, 1961).

As a result of this initiative, the very first Wednesday matinee opera performance was sponsored by the Junior League and held for primary children and their parents in October 1961. *The Bartered Bride* had been a sold out performance with ticket prices of \$1.00 per student. However, since the cost of producing the show was \$10,000 and the discounted ticket sales revenue had only generated \$3,000, a \$7,000 shortage for the COC resulted. A meeting to decide whether to continue the presentations in the future was held: "After a short discussion, Mr.

Geiger-Torel was asked to proceed with negotiations with the Junior League to continue if possible the collaboration under better financial conditions" ("Minutes" of the Board of Directors, October 30, 1961).

Although there were serious financial concerns, Geiger-Torel announced in February, 1962, that the primary-aged student program would continue: "The Junior League of Toronto shall again sponsor this year's performance of *Hansel and Gretel*" ("General Director's Report," February 13, 1962).

Hansel and Gretel had been scheduled for December 1962 and had been sponsored by the Junior League at reduced ticket prices. According to *The Telegram*, *Hansel and Gretel* had been "over-subscribed and the three remaining performances are selling well" (October 13, 1962). By December 1962, *Toronto Star*, had reported that the children's performance of the same opera (*Hansel and Gretel*) was "oversubscribed by 12,000 seats" (December, 1962). Geiger-Torel's report verified these claims:

15,000 ticket orders could not be filled. However, nine thousand lucky children could be placed in Saturday matinee performances of the same opera but the rest remained disappointed due to the complete sell-out. You will see later on, what we shall do in 1963 in order to give more children and students the opportunity to see and hear opera. ("General Director's Report," February 4, 1963)

In announcing the 1963 season, Geiger-Torel reported that three matinee performances of *Hansel and Gretel* had been planned for elementary school children at reduced prices and that the performances would be sponsored by the Jr. WOC. In conclusion he said: "We are all deeply convinced that the heavy losses which these performances produce are fully justified" ("General Director's Report," February 4, 1963).

In preparation for the 1963 productions of *Hansel and Gretel*, the Jr. WOC Children's Matinee Committee, under the leadership of Mrs. Derek Osler, assembled and organized the delivery of flyers to 500 schools within the Metro Toronto area. As a result, *Hansel and Gretel*, presented in English, had three sold out performances at the O'Keefe Centre for an audience of 9,000 elementary children: "To our relief, the three performances were sold out and we took in

\$12,060 from the gate. Our thanks go to this Board for 'putting out' the rest" ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 13, 1964).

After such a success, the Jr. WOC made plans to present four instead of three performances for primary children in the autumn of 1964. Unfortunately they were disappointed to discover that the project, along with other COC programs, had to be discontinued to help reduce the overall COC deficit. It was announced that there would be a "temporary elimination of the special performances at low prices for primary school children" ("Treasurer's Report," February 13, 1964).

Undaunted by the canceled projects, the Jr. WOC initiated plans to continue the operas in a new location at the MacMillan Theatre along with the help of the Royal Conservatory of Music Opera School instead of the COC. The Jr. WOC planned to present seven performances of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* by Menotti from the 14th to the 19th of December, 1964 and expected that ticket sales would balance the cost of the production. With the assistance of Geiger-Torel and Dr. Ettore Mazzoleni from the Royal Conservatory of Music Opera School, the Jr. WOC was optimistic: "Dr. Ettore Mazzoleni has been most co-operative and feels this will afford the students a worthwhile experience. I am sure that with Mr. Geiger-Torel's ingenuity and direction we can be assured that both students and children will benefit equally" ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 13, 1964).

In preparation for the December 1964 performance of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, the Jr. WOC believed that to "sponsor an opera means not only financial backing, but also many hours of volunteer work." With the help of the British American Oil Company that generously donated 150,000 flyers, the Jr. WOC was able to distribute publicity to over 500 Metro Toronto schools. For the first time ever, the Jr. WOC also contacted all the Boards of Education surrounding Toronto. Program advertising was sold and soon "the home of the Chairman, Mrs. MacLatchy was turned into a box office for 4 weeks, where everyone worked on ticketing procedures" ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 18, 1965).

With the children's opera relocated to the MacMillan Theatre at the University of Toronto, more performances could be presented at an affordable price by the

Royal Conservatory of Music Opera School for young audiences. So, in December 1964, all seven performances of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* were presented as planned.

After reviewing this first season at the MacMillan Theatre, the Jr. WOC reported:

It is logical that a young committee would be interested in culture for young people. It seems that opera for children performed by the Opera School students – our future opera stars, is not only more feasible financially but also more sensible. (“Junior Women’s Committee Report,” February 18, 1965)

One year later in December 1965, the Jr. WOC sponsored another opera for the children at the MacMillan Theatre. The President of the WOC reported:

Under the outstanding Chairmanship of Mrs. Rodney Anderson, the Junior Committee promoted and sold tickets for a week of performances of Prokofiev’s *The Love for Three Oranges*, produced with opera School students in the MacMillan Theatre for elementary school children. 10,000 children saw these productions for a \$1.00 and had a ball. (“Women’s Committee Report,” February 3, 1966)

Mrs. Rodney Anderson, Jr. WOC Chairman, also reported on the committee’s involvement with *The Love of Three Oranges* production: “We feel our investment of time and energy will be amply repaid when these 10,000 children start turning up at the O’ Keefe box office. There has been an important program of children’s opera that will be expanded in the future” (“Junior Women’s Committee Report,” February 3, 1966).

Although the Jr. WOC were COC volunteers to “function primarily in the two vital areas of fund raising and audience promotion,” Anderson shared her committee’s philosophy at the 1966 Annual Meeting: “It is inevitable, however, that our Committee should have a special interest in another branch of audience promotion—education.” She identified the importance of the arts for children, particularly for the Committee’s own 74 elementary and junior high children collectively: “We would like to see these children accept opera, ballet, classical music, drama and the fine arts as basic elements in their environment, to be enjoyed

along with skiing and discotheque and James Bond” (“Junior Women’s Committee Report,” February 3, 1966).

Anderson and her committee had clearly demonstrated commitment and a successful record regarding children’s opera and were acknowledged at the COC 1966 Annual Meeting “for the outstanding work done by her and the Junior Committee” (COC “President’s Report,” February 3, 1966).

Geiger-Torel, who continued to support the Jr. WOC, said the elementary student operas were his “pet projects—bringing opera to young people, our future audiences.” Geiger-Torel continued to assist the Jr. WOC with “investigations as to how, when and where we can present, professionally, opera in schools.” It would have been impossible to increase the number of student performances if the opera was to return to the O’Keefe Centre, where, Geiger-Torel announced, “the loss per performance is simply colossal due to the very low income (reduced ticket prices of \$1.50 per seat)” (“General Director’s Report,” February 3, 1966).

In 1966-1967, the Jr. WOC once again sponsored a new presentation of *Hansel and Gretel* by Humperdinck, performed by the Royal Conservatory Opera School. The opera was sold out 2 weeks before the opening of the show even though there were three more primary student performances than in the previous year. The performances were conducted by Maestro Barbini: “Flyers were wrapped, addressed, and distributed to over 500 schools in Metropolitan Toronto and all six performances were sold out two weeks prior to the opening” (“Junior Women’s Committee Report,” February 17, 1967).

Children gave their feedback at the closing night cast party of *Hansel and Gretel* when Maestro Barbini read the letters from school children who had attended the performance. Months later, in her report, Mrs. Wm. MacLatchy, Chairman of the Jr. WOC, also commented on the reactions of the children: “One of the most significant rewards of this project is seeing the enthusiasm of the children and knowing they are developing an interest in opera” (“Junior Women’s Committee Report,” February 17, 1967).

In 1967-1968, *The Magic Flute* was presented for the elementary children at

the Macmillan Theatre once again performed by the Royal Conservatory Opera school. The Jr. WOC recorded the response:

To this we can add the word "*rewarding*." A response that we have been cultivating each year, and supported by the high standard of the productions of the Opera School in the past years. And a response that we must meet through more performances next year. What a happy problem! An eager and waiting audience! ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 22, 1968)

Reflecting upon Canada's busy Centennial year (1967) in which opera for children relied heavily on the Jr. WOC's assistance, the Chairman of the Jr. WOC, MacLatchy, once again reviewed the purpose and direction of the Committee at the Annual Meeting:

Always mindful of the importance of advancing and developing, and a key purpose of the Committee is Education, and so it should be for a group with over 50 youngsters! As we support projects that provide the opportunities to develop their aesthetic sensibilities, which cannot but enhance their lives— always giving pleasure and delight. ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 22, 1968)

The President of the Canadian Opera Association, Mr. Air Marshal Curtis, also recognized that, through the years, the Canadian Opera Company's development "was not an overnight miracle but a gradual, often painful, time-consuming process, performed by a few people with immense determination to do their jobs" ("Annual President's Report," February 22, 1968).

In 1968, Mrs. Donald P. Dowd, Chairman of the Jr. WOC, continued to share the same interest in children's opera, as had been the case in previous years: "Our major project, which is both promotional and educational, and which is our greatest joy and achievement, is the production of the Children's Opera in conjunction with the Royal Conservatory of Music in December" ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 20, 1969).

The Jr. WOC continued the successful children's opera programs into the next season and again sponsored another children's opera entitled *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, by Ravel. The opera was reserved by the Toronto School Boards and was sold out for the mid week performances. The response to *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, presented in December 1969, was "a happy one as the story, sets, and

music were tremendously appealing to our young audiences. School Boards completely reserved and sold out the mid-week performances and the two Saturdays were available to the general public" ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 12, 1970).

However, the format of the 1969 children's opera had changed dramatically as the Jr. WOC were "forced by circumstances" beyond their control to hire a unionized orchestra instead of the student orchestra which had been used in the past. According to Chairman, Mrs. Gwen Vernon:

A crisis was reached whereby we could not afford the costs of both orchestra and production. The opera department offered the happy solution of selecting an opera, for their 1st production of the year, suitable for children that we could repeat at Christmas with no production costs involved. ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 12, 1970)

The Jr. WOC was able to avoid production costs and only pay for the orchestra.

The Jr. WOC was also fortunate to have received a generous donation of tickets from "Operation Angel" which enabled 150 children from various agencies across Metro Toronto who could not have otherwise afforded to come to the opera, to attend two performances of *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*. As a result, "some had an opportunity to meet the cast and the thrill of obtaining an autograph from their favourite character" ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 12, 1970).

Links were also being created between arts organizations and arts educator associations.

COC Links with Ontario Music Conference and Arts Organizations

The COC accepted an invitation from the Honourable William Davis and the Honourable J. Keiller McKay, chairman, Province of Ontario Council for the Arts, to participate in the Ontario Music Conference held in Geneva Park, Lake Couchiching, Ontario, from April 14-17, 1966 (Invitation to Geiger-Torel from Davis and McKay, 1966). The conference included music educators, professional arts organizations, and Ontario Government representatives. The event was organized to examine all aspects of music in Ontario, involving a study of music in the schools, the community,

and the role of the professional. The purpose was to expose the current problems; seek practical, long range solutions to the problems; and “to make recommendations and suggest priorities for the implementation of a total music concept for Ontario” (“Ontario Music Conference Report,” April 14, 1966).

The keynote address was presented by Mr. Keith Bissell, the Supervisor of Music for Elementary Schools in Scarborough who intended to create:

the necessary action required to capitalize fully on our obvious potential– to give our children nothing but the best, to present a model to the world, not in the sense of narrow nationalistic pride, but in the spirit of showing all nations the way to a full realization of the value and civilizing power of music in education. (“Ontario Music Conference Report,” April 14, 1966, p. 2)

Bissell explained why music education, as a subject in the elementary school, was first on the conference agenda: “Its problems are particularly acute, and because we cannot hope to deal effectively with the areas of secondary education, community, professional and university until we have first agreed upon the corrective measures required here.” He anticipated that participants would be “disturbed, and possibly shocked by the picture that emerged” after they had read a description of current music programs in the conference manual. He said that “a major factor impeding real progress in the elementary school” was the belief system that “it was better for the young child to be taught all subjects, however badly, by one teacher, than to be taught each subject competently by a specialist.” He also told the music professionals from the arts organizations such as the COC that they were “too narrowly concerned with jobs and box office” and had “failed to realize that a large part of the public indifference to good music begins right in kindergarten” (“Ontario Music Conference Report,” April 14, 1966).

Bissell encouraged each participant to take “responsibility” for presenting him with a “blueprint for elementary music education designed to challenge the imagination of the province and this country.” Participants were then expected to go to their discussion groups and seek answers to the key question in their conference handbook. “What responsibility has the elementary level of education for initiating music as a step towards the full development of society. Do not be content with

mediocrity—with less than real excellence” (“Ontario Music Conference Report,” April 14, 1966).

The Honourable Mr. Davis, Minister of Education represented the Ontario Government’s interest in the growth of music education: “I am interested in the educational aspects of musical development in this Province. However, I think there is a very close interrelationship between the educational, the community and the professional levels.” Davis was concerned that music education and other art forms hadn’t progressed as rapidly as other areas of social development because there had been such a great emphasis upon industrial, economic, and technological development over the past 7- to 8-year period. He assured the conference attendees:

the government is very vitally interested in every aspect of musical development in this Province. It is obviously becoming increasingly more important that we concentrate more attention on an equal development on, perhaps, the cultural or the emotional side of our education (“Address by Honourable Mr. Davis,” Minister of Education to Ontario Music Conference, Geneva Park, Lake Couchiching, April, 1966).

He also explained how government agencies such as The Ontario Arts Council, were “anxious to co-operate with existing organizations to utilize our resources and affect any worthwhile and necessary changes.” Davis also recognized the wide range of musical activity represented at the conference and referred to them as “every level, from kindergarten to the Canadian Opera Company. It is heartwarming to realize that you recognize your responsibility, because it is your responsibility to ensure that the full potential of your particular interest is in fact realized.” Davis then pointed out that every aspect of musical activity was equally important and then challenged the audience to provide leadership in the development of the cultural aspects of the community: “There must be interlocking and mutual co-operation between all levels of music development and I suggest a unified voice to speak on your behalf.” Davis said that the audience constituted “the vanguard of an exciting new musical experience for the people of the Province. I can assure you that the Department of Education is very genuinely interested in your discussions this

weekend" ("Address by Honourable William Davis," Minister of Education to Ontario Music Conference, April, 1966).

Following Davis' speech, conference members divided into colour-coded discussion groups to discuss each of the main workshop topics and to provide action steps. The topics were: music education in elementary schools, music education in the secondary schools, the role of the university in music education, music in the community, the professional musician, and the priorities for action.

During Workshop #5 entitled "The Professional Musician," many groups made suggestions. The Orange group suggested that the symphony orchestra should extend its season in order to involve groups such as school systems, choirs, ballet, and opera companies during the new season. Next they recommended the creation of a non-profit concert management organization to be created for the purpose of co-ordinating young touring musicians. The "Young Audiences Incorporated of U.S.A.," a concert giving organization for children in the Elementary and Secondary School System could also be investigated with a view of adapting it to schools in Canada. Finally they suggested that The Canadian Music Council should create a promotional program whereby music activities could flourish within the community.

The Blue group recommended that a "non-profit provincial agency be established to promote and provide information and booking arrangements for primarily Canadian artists and groups to communities and educational institutes in Ontario." It was also recommended that professional musicians be invited to local communities and schools.

The Purple group recommended that the "Department of Education supply funds to employ a person for developing programs and co-ordinating the visits of artists, symphonies and operas at schools throughout the province."

Dr. Egon Kraus, professor of Music Education at the Teacher Training Institute, in Oldberg, Germany concluded the conference with a final address and referred to the conference as a model. However, he believed that in order to make progress, the colour groups needed to provide a summary of main ideas from their

recommendations so they would not be forgotten after the conference. He first recommended that teachers should have 3 years of training in music with at least 60 hours of instruction in music, instead of 20 hours at teacher's college. His second recommendation:

Why cannot music instruction be an integrated subject equally with the other school school subjects? Only in this way can all children be given equal opportunity for musical experiences and growth through music. Music in schools should be provided at all levels of education (Address by Dr. Egon Kraus, Ontario Music Conference, Geneva Park, Lake Couchiching, April 17, 1966).

Egon Kraus's third recommendation was about discarding the phrases: "This cannot be done," or "This seems unrealistic as long as we don't have the right teachers or the appropriate facilities." In conclusion:

Future music education must be based on exact findings and not feelings and emotions. Only through co-operation between experts in these fields and music teachers, new ideas and methods can be developed and realized. I therefore think that one of the most important decisions of this conference was the necessity for the establishment of a Music Education Institute which should be responsible for the research in music education and for the application of its findings. (Address by Dr. Egon Kraus, Ontario Music Conference, Geneva Park, Lake Couchiching, April 17, 1966)

The Conference had paved the way for the future liaison between the arts organizations and the Boards of Education and strongly influenced a proposal to form the Prologue to the Performing Arts.

COC Educational Extension–Initiation of Prologue to the Performing Arts

The Prologue to the Performing Arts first originated in 1966 when a group of volunteers had a "dream to present plays, operas and ballets to school children as an intregal part of their education" (Prologue to the Performing Arts Brochure, 1968-1969). Their goal was to create a non-profit organization to present such programs within the school system.

According to Mr. John Leberg, former COC Director of Operations during part of the 1960s and most of the 1970s, Prologue was started

by a number of well-meaning ladies from the ballet and the opera who thought it would be very nice to see if both companies could provide a short program to children in their schools having something

to do with opera, ballet and later the Young People's Theatre. (Leberg, personal communication, May 10, 2003).

By March 1966, representatives from the National Ballet, the Toronto Symphony, the Museum's Children's Theatre, and the Canadian Opera Company had discussed the possibilities and had decided to offer a "package deal" to the Toronto Boards of Education consisting of four 1-hour portable productions for grades 7 and 8 students and some grade 9 students. Their intention was to present the idea of a well rounded school program where all the participants would benefit, but the necessity of dealing with each professional group would be avoided. The Boards liked the idea of a combined series and provided suggestions. One suggestion was to have each arts group prepare advance material for the teachers so pupils could be knowledgeable about the shows. The next suggestion was to have the artists talk with the children following a performance in order to further their learning. The suggestion to set up a reasonable fee structure was also considered; sometimes the children would be charged 50 cents each for a presentation while at other times the Board of Education would carry the cost. The Boards of Education also recognized that the Toronto Symphony (TSO) wouldn't be part of the package since it had its own program already in operation with many of the Boards of Education. The creation of Prologue would allow the COC to offer mini 1- hour opera presentations in Metropolitan Toronto junior schools.

The proposal for the Prologue to the Performing Arts outlined the purpose for its existence, administrative procedures, funding details, as well as the scope and content of the series to be presented. The proposal is summarized below.

1. Background—Why Prologue was formed

The rationale was described as a long time dream which would enable programs in the performing arts to become an important aspect of the education for school children. Although the opera and other arts organizations were offering performances at low ticket prices, it was realized that in most cases it would only be the parents and teachers interested in the arts who

would ever attend a performance with their children. Also, it was realized that the majority of students would never have an opportunity to attend a performance unless a performance was actually brought to their school.

2. Administration of the Prologue Series

- a) Prologue would begin as an unincorporated association and later would incorporate as part of a non-profit corporation if there became such a need.
- b) Contracts would be sent to the school boards and performing companies.
- c) Prologue would have a co-ordinator to schedule performances up to the point where the school boards would take over. The co-ordinator would serve as the central contact between the schools, the school boards, and the performing groups.

3. Cost of the Prologue Series

A series of three shows would have a fixed cost of \$1,321 in total per school or \$440 for each performance. Each artist would be given the same amount of weekly pay regardless of the number of performances, which could not exceed 10 performances a week and a minimum of 30 performances in total for the season. It was then determined that 30 operas in a four-week period could be done cheaper on a 7-7-8-8 ratio due to the union regulations that only allowed artists to perform a specific number of times. Extra fees would be paid beyond the specified number of performances and it was determined that more performances over a 6-week period would bring the price down as a saving. Finally, the board would be responsible for prompt payment in order to pay the artists weekly. (Proposal by Prologue to the Performing Arts document, May, 1966)

By May 1966 Prologue to the Performing Arts had finally been formed as a committee consisting of Mrs. Anderson as Chairman, Mrs. George Bishop as Vice Chairman, Mrs. Derek Osler as secretary, Mrs. Douglas Scott as Treasurer, Mrs. Jan Rubes as Public Relations, and five other advisory members who acted as liaison between the performing arts companies and the School Boards. The committee set

out specific expectations and prepared a three-page contract for each of the arts companies (opera, ballet, and theatre) to sign in preparation of the new touring pilot project (Contract between COC and Prologue to the Performing Arts, January 19, 1967).

In the first season of 1966-1967, the COC Planning Committee was appointed to oversee the planning and budgeting of the COC Prologue school tours. At the annual meeting in February 1967, Geiger-Torel announced:

another exciting project will be launched. under the patronage of "Prologue to the Performing Arts" and financed by the five Metropolitan Toronto School Boards, our company will present 37 performances of Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* (The Cunning Maid) in 33 different schools for grade 7, 8, and 9 pupils. A very fine double cast including Gwen Little, Carrol Anne Curry, Maurice Brown, Donald Young and Robert Carley with Dr. Brough as music director and myself as director, will give two performances per day during an entire month. We hope that this pilot project will be such a success that in future years many more schools will be included. young people will get a taste of opera; they will be able—if they like this kind of hors d'oeuvre—to see the "real thing" at the O'Keefe Centre; a new generation of opera goers is growing up. ("General Director's Report," February 17, 1967)

Prior to each of the performances, two pages of well organized materials consisting of a description of the opera, the story synopsis, and details about the characters were sent out to participating schools. The Jr. Women's Committee gladly volunteered to assist Prologue tours to schools, acting as co-ordinators on Wednesdays and Fridays and ensuring that the costumes, props, and sets were kept to a minimum for traveling purposes. The two casts of *La Serva Padrona* used an eight-page script that had been condensed for their show which included the insertions of their arias (COC Script of *La Serva Padrona*, February, 1967).

According to Curry, a performer in the COC Prologue productions, the COC looked after all the sets and costumes: "We had a small set. It had to be designed to be assembled and deconstructed quickly and we always wore costumes, wigs, and make-up. There was lighting too. That's why it was expensive" (personal communication, March 27, 2003).

The first COC Prologue performance was February 20, 1967 at Richview

C.I. in Etobicoke. On March 13, 1967 Deer Park Senior School also saw a performance to which the principal responded by letter (Prologue Opera Schedule, February 20, 1967). Mr. J. A. Pipher expressed appreciation: "The production was most interesting and educational, and I certainly hope there will be a similar opportunity available to the senior schools in the years to come" (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Pipher, March 22, 1967). Mr. W. L. Mortson, Principal at Fairmount Park Senior School, Toronto was also pleased with the performance:

The entire staff and I were most impressed with the excellent opera presentation, and the way our students reacted. For the majority, it was the first opera they had ever seen, and every class indicated they would welcome the opportunity to see another. (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Mortson, March (day unknown), 1967)

Mr. George Kidd, reporter for the *Toronto Telegram* also responded: "The performances were bright and interesting—both casts are splendid and so are the handsome props, sets and costumes, which produce the true atmosphere" (February, 23, 1967, page number unavailable).

By July 5, 1967 a new concern had arisen. Mr. Terence O'Dell from the Actors' Equity Association sent a letter to the COC stipulating what the opera cast was to receive in wages for future engagements in order to participate in the Prologue to the Performing Arts Productions. The union requested that the performers be paid \$115.00 per week in Toronto and \$145.00 per week outside Toronto. Also, the stage managers and directors were to receive a higher salary. Further instructions stated that only two performances were to be permitted per day and that cast members were to be picked up and returned to a central location on the same day at expense of the producer (Letter to Geiger-Torel from the Actors' Equity Association, July 5, 1967).

Accepting the terms of the Actors' Equity Association and deciding to continue with Prologue while having the COC Planning Committee oversee the project, Geiger-Torel received and signed a new Prologue contract for the 1968 season and returned it to the new Prologue Committee consisting of Mrs. George Bishop as Chairman and Mrs. Douglas Scott as Vice Chairman. The COC was now

contracted for 68 student performances starting in March 1968, a sharp increase in the number of performances from the 37 that had been held in the pilot year. A total fee of \$23,800 would be returned to the COC (Contract between COC and Prologue to the Performing Arts, December 15, 1967).

Early in 1968, Geiger-Torel addressed the COC Annual meeting and referred to the Prologue to the Performing Arts:

This project is not only of the greatest importance as far as introducing opera to children is concerned, but also to our own artists who, with rehearsals, will have an additional 9 weeks' activity! To keep our artists in Canada we must provide work for them. ("General Director's Report, February 22, 1968)

Following the success of *The Old Maid and the Thief* during the winter and spring months of 1968, both within and beyond the Toronto Metro schools, it became obvious that the out-of-town Boards of Education had taken a keen interest in the "Prologue" series. By this time, the out-of-town bookings had accounted for about one third of the total opera performances that had been shown to approximately 225,000 students.

The out-of-town tours were also referred to in the new Prologue Publicity Brochure sent out to the schools early in 1968 and were described as "a great artistic force on this continent. Its in-town and touring season is exceeded only by the Metropolitan Opera of New York" (Prologue to the Arts Brochure, 1968-1969). The tours were also referred to in another section of the same brochure alongside the newly revised Prologue purpose:

to assist in the development of young children towards an appreciation of beauty and art by bringing a series of three programs of top artistic quality directly to the schools. It is evident that, with requests coming from such distant centers as Atikokan and Rainy River, Prologue must continue to expand, thus bringing to many more children its stimulating introduction to the performing arts. (Prologue to the Performing Arts Brochure, 1968-1969).

Following the successful performances of *The Old Maid and the Thief* during March and April 1968, Mrs. Mary B. Scott, Vice Chairman and Treasurer of Prologue, sent a letter to the Geiger-Torel: "We have been enjoying the 'Old Maid and the Thief' very much, and we are very grateful to you for your interest in our

programme" (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Scott, April 17, 1968). In May, 1968 Geiger-Torel answered Scott, regretfully declining her invitation to a scheduled Prologue party being held on May 15, 1968 (Letter to Scott from Geiger-Torel, May 3, 1968).

Bishop, Chairman of Prologue to the Performing Arts invited Geiger-Torel to speak at an upcoming meeting between the school boards of Metropolitan Toronto and the various arts groups which offered programs for school-age children. Other invited speakers were also to present their programs (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Bishop, May 14, 1968).

Geiger-Torel was asked in May to discuss issues of planning and budgeting with the COC Planning Committee. Curtis, President of the COC, told Geiger-Torel that the Prologue tours should create revenue. Geiger-Torel in turn pointed out that the COC actually had made a profit of \$1,000 in 1967 and that in 1968 they had broken even. Geiger-Torel also reminded Curtis that Prologue was an "audience building program from which we presently and will in future benefit" ("Minutes" of the Planning Committee, May 24, 1968).

At Bishop's request Geiger-Torel met with the school boards of Metropolitan Toronto and the various Toronto arts groups at the Badminton and Racquet Club located at 25 St. Clair Avenue West in Toronto on June 11, 1968. Geiger-Torel's speech briefly described the different programs that were offered by the COC for school students and asked for Prologue's help in co-ordinating various COC student programs: "It seems to become a necessity in order to avoid a multitude of overlapping activities." Geiger-Torel presented his thoughts about the future growth of opera for children and introduced the idea of a Junior Club to the Performing Arts, similar to one that had been operating in Vancouver. He also suggested a way of co-ordinating services for young people, such as the purchase of a subscription for a package series of performances including opera, ballet, theatre, and a symphony. He concluded:

Finally, one thing may be missing. Children from grade one (Kindergarten) to grade six should be carefully exposed to opera.

Introductory talks, easy to understand and delivered with a good sense of humour, supported by an aria or two by a fine singer, might do the job. (Speech by Mr. Geiger-Torel to meeting of the school boards of Metropolitan Toronto and affiliated arts organizations at the Badminton and Racquet Club, Toronto, June 11, 1968)

By June 1968, the Jr. Women's Committee, that had been volunteering for Prologue 1 day a week, decided to discontinue its efforts in this project in order to initiate a new free-of-charge school puppet opera for elementary children scheduled to begin in the spring of 1970.

In preparation for the upcoming 1968-1969 season Prologue once again sent out their contract to the COC. In this contract, the COC was now engaged for 129 school performances for 1969. Geiger-Torel signed the contract on November 15, 1968 and enclosed a letter to Bishop, the Chair of Prologue. Geiger-Torel asked for a meeting with him to discuss the exact contract wording of future contracts. He questioned the meaning of "high standard" and "obeying all applicable rules, regulations and requirements" and asked for clarification of the sentence: "You will cooperate with Prologue and the ballet and theatre groups participating in this joint program in establishing standards for performances." He argued: "We are all good friends who have co-operated splendidly together in the past two years; our company has met the required high standards of all Prologue performances and we have never had any disagreements" (Letter to Bishop at Prologue from Geiger-Torel, November 15, 1968).

In the early part of the following year, Geiger-Torel once again spoke about Prologue at the 1969 Annual Meeting: "We are grateful to be part of this excellent venture. As you know Prologue is fully subsidized by the Metro Toronto School Board" ("General Director's Report," February 20, 1969).

Shortly after the Annual Meeting, Geiger-Torel met with the Prologue Committee and warned them that there was a possibility that the arts might not have a large audience in 20 years. Therefore, Prologue was needed so that live theatre could be experienced in a fun way and possibly expose children to a career in the performing arts. He concluded that the COC was proud to be a part of Prologue.

In the upcoming season, the Prologue-commissioned opera, *The Secret of Suzanne*, written by Wolf-Ferrari was presented from February 17 through to May 29, 1969. Geiger-Torel received a three-page letter from an unidentified East York school principal regarding the performance held at his school. The principal said that he was impressed with the singing and acting abilities of the cast and as a result of the show, some of his students now wanted to attend a full production opera:

The opera was well chosen for our students. They were charmed by the butler who introduced the scene. However, I got the impression that opera was the most difficult presentation to all, for our students. The question and answer period at the end of the performance was most beneficial and quite worthwhile. They believed that opera—once again, admirably chosen to appeal to the students, some suspense, some comedy, not too deep in significance, easily understood, thanks to the gestures of the performers and excellent performance by the mute butler. The opera has a plausible story, good melodious music and an imaginative setting. (Letter to Geiger-Torel from East York Principal, 1969)

The enthusiastic principal believed that a discerning taste in the arts had already begun to grow among his students since the inception of Prologue. Also, since his students always enjoyed the comic aspects of the shows, he would “heartily endorse any program of this type to give students the opportunity to see the real stage in action” (Letter to Geiger-Torel from East York Principal, 1969).

Once again the out-of-town Prologue shows maintained their popularity in the 1969 season when another school principal wrote a letter requesting that Prologue visit major centers in the “farthest part of northern Ontario,” including the Lakeland region (Letter to Geiger-Torel from unnamed school principal, September, 22, 1969). Geiger-Torel responded to Bishop, whose responsibility it was to respond to Prologue requests, and said the COC would consider the request for the 1970-1971 season as there would be the probability of a higher fee for a northern Ontario visit (Letter to Bishop from Geiger-Torel, October 31, 1969).

Once again, the annual Prologue contract was sent to Geiger-Torel on October 27, 1969 and indicated there would be 153 performances under contract. On his copy sent, Geiger-Torel wrote these words beside the number of 153 performances: “(16 weeks!! 10 T + 6 out).” He returned a signed contract on

November 3, 1969. The contract content was similar to previous years including the performance schedule (Contract between COC and Prologue to the Performing Arts, November 3, 1969). However, this was the first year that the contract enclosed a sample of a new three-page booklet that was being sent to the schools upon booking. The booklet addressed the role of arts in education, local artistic resources, problems of subsidized matinees, what is Prologue, aims of the Prologue series and a Prologue to the Performing Arts 10-point Information Sheet (Prologue to the Performing Arts 10-point Information sheet, 1969).

As a new initiative, Prologue sent a welcoming introductory letter from the Chairman, Mrs. B. Scott, along with a school package of materials to each of the schools. The package contained a Prologue brochure describing the programs (sent each year in the past), a Prologue to the Performing Arts 10-point Information Sheet, a list of cast members, two pages of additional background information titled Prologue to the Performing Arts, and an evaluation sheet with an enclosed return envelope. This was the first time an evaluation form had ever been included in school materials. The *Prologue to the Performing Arts* booklet (1969-1970) showed increasing sophistication in its publicity and understanding of how to serve schools better. It addressed:

1. The Role of Education in the Arts as an educational system to help children adapt to becoming mature adults:

By acquainting our children with the arts we stimulate their imaginations, give their emotions a constructive outlet and perhaps provide them with a lifelong interest. It is for these reasons that the arts should be an integral part of the education all our children receive.

2. Local Artistic Resources for Toronto children to benefit from the arts (ballet, opera, theatre, orchestra) which only New York and San Francisco could match.

3. The Problems of Subsidized Matinees which are usually initiated by parents who have either the financial resources or an appreciation of the arts and encourage their children to attend a performance which end up for only the privileged.

4. What Is Prologue? Prologue is an exercise in co-operation. The COC Opera, National Ballet, Toronto Symphony, and Museum's Children's Theatre decided to combine their efforts towards their similar aim: "Their common aim was to awaken the interest of young people in their respective art forms." They believed that their art form created a "well-rounded school program." They believed that they could create a compact portable show suited to children's needs. The result was the "incorporation of a non-profit organization for the purpose of developing co-operatively with the performing companies a series of performances which could be offered to the school boards in Prologue's name."

5. Aims of the Prologue Series— an introduction to the arts for children in grades 7, 8 and 9. The series provides three different tours to the schools with one ballet, opera, and theatre production each. About 75,000 children would be introduced to the series in 1969. (Prologue to the Performing Arts booklet 1969-1970)

A Prologue to the Performing Arts Information Sheet was also part of the teacher package and included detailed information regarding the requirements for the school equipment, staging, arrival and starting times, discussion period, audience size and visitor expectations.

The Prologue evaluation form requested the performance date, the name of the school, the Board of Education, the principal or staff observer, the reaction of the students and staff, personal comments, and a request of teachers to share any helpful resource material. Teachers were then asked to answer the following three questions:

Would consultive help from your own school services be beneficial?, Do you see ways or means of extending the performance experience into the school and classroom programs?, If Prologue could provide professional assistance, e.g. a drama workshop, do you feel this would be of value to your staff and students? (Prologue to the Performing Arts Evaluation form, 1969)

Prologue and the COC also provided the singers with a standard reference

sheet which referred to the list of the expected questions and suggested answers for use in the discussion period which followed the show:

How many performances of this opera do you do?, Will you be singing in all these performances?, Have you appeared on television?, Do you earn enough money to live on from singing? Is the composer alive?, In what language was the opera written? Why did you call this work an intermezzo? What are the highest notes you sing in this work?, Can you sing higher?, How do you become an opera singer?, Where can you study to become an opera singer?, Who made the scenery?, Who created the costumes?, Are you busy the whole year?, How long has the Canadian Opera Company been in existence?, Has anybody made an international career?, What is the season at the O' Keefe Centre in 1969?, What will be the opera for the special student matinees? (List of popular Questions and Answers for COC performers, 1969)

The COC Planning Committee also reviewed a proposal by Mr. Anderson at the December 1969 meeting concerning the upcoming Prologue presentations which were considered for the 1971-1972 season. Repetition of some of the earlier operas could be implemented for new audience viewing. The opera *The Old Maid and the Thief* was then suggested as a possible future repeat. With future plans in place, the Prologue program continued into the 1970s.

Conclusion

The 1960s was a time of optimism which was prompted by the opening of the new O'Keefe Centre and the formation of the Prologue to the Performing Arts.

Although there was not a clear mandate for opera education for students, there was a tremendous amount of teamwork and commitment on the part of the WOC, the Jr. WOC, Prologue with their Arts Council grants, the School Boards, and the Ontario Music Educators Association to a common goal.

As an outgrowth of the 1966 Ontario Music Conference, along with an inspired group of moms who sought to have arts activities introduced to their children at a young age, Prologue to the Performing Arts was born. Prologue had successfully acted as the booking agent for COC school shows for junior schools. It became significant; the number of performances almost doubled each year during the 1960s.

There were a number of concerns: discipline problems among students,

teachers with no background about opera, financial issues, correspondence delays, scheduling problems, and union contracts. There were also successes: new publicity ideas, increased exposure, new resources for teachers, and favourable responses from many students and teachers.

Great strides were taken in the 1960s even though there were obvious concerns. It was during this decade that the tone for opera education for decades to come was set. The decade began and finished with optimism. As a result, thousands of children from the elementary, junior, and secondary schools in Ontario were introduced to opera and inspired to dream and create at a young age.

CHAPTER SIX

The 1970s

Three COC committees had their own objectives and visions for opera education in the 1970s. Although an educational mandate did not exist at the beginning of the decade, three Committees followed COC guidelines in their efforts to promote opera education. First, the COC Women's Committee, known as the WOC, continued to promote the secondary and junior high school opera productions held at the O'Keefe Centre. Secondly, the Jr. Women's Committee, known as the Jr. WOC, continued to sponsor opera productions for elementary school age children held at the MacMillan Theatre. They also sponsored the elementary school puppet opera productions in Toronto schools. Next, the COC Planning Committee monitored the Prologue to the Performing Arts opera school tours. A fourth committee also followed the COC guidelines. The Opera Guild committee was responsible for organizing the out-of-town guilds which oversaw the Prologue tours in various cities.

Each of these programs was concerned with the growth of opera education in Ontario during the 1970s. The question is: How did each of these programs evolve? To find answers, the following initiatives will be examined:

1. secondary and junior high school student performances,
2. elementary children's opera performances,
3. elementary children's puppet opera performances,
4. COC link with Prologue to the Performing Arts tours, and
5. Opera Guilds–Prologue tours.

Secondary and Junior High School Student Performances

Don Giovanni was performed for students on October 15, 1970. The WOC raised \$12,056 from ticket sales and donated it to the COC. At the annual meeting held in February 1971, the WOC reported that "probably turning dollars over to the

COC is really our main purpose" ("Women's Committee Report," February 18, 1971).

The WOC had proven its continued support and keen interest in secondary and junior high school student performances. Although it was responsible for raising money, a belief in developing student audiences had never wavered:

Realistically, I know that every young person does not [love an opera from the first chord]; some are bored. If I could think that even one adolescent in fifty attending our performances would become inspired, would feel enriched, I should be happy indeed. Happy to think that from this one would come leaders to guide others in the future toward "The Good Life." Thousands of children have had operatic experiences in 1970 through our efforts. It is, I believe, the right of every child, every adult, to be exposed to the arts. ("Women's Committee Report," February 18, 1971)

For the 1971-1972 season, the WOC claimed its purpose was "building future audiences" ("Women's Committee Report," March 3, 1972). Puccini's opera, *Madame Butterfly*, was performed on October 7 and 14, 1971 for a discounted price of \$2.50. The shows were sold out and had a waiting list of schools wanting to attend. Students who traveled the farthest to attend the opera were from Switzerland ("Women's Committee Report," March 3, 1971).

A revenue of \$9,000 was generated from ticket sales for two productions of *Eugene Onegin* in the 1972-1973 season and \$15,035 for Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* in the 1973-1974 season.

In the 1974-1975 season, Harry Somer's opera, *Louis Riel*, was also presented for two student performances. A summary of students' reactions to the performance was included in the WOC Report:

The secondary school student performances were excitedly received by capacity audiences. We rejoice in the increased public encouragement given to our projects, thanks to the support of the press, television and radio. We feel, we have furthered a vital cause, the building of a wider interest in opera and the development of an understanding and love of the lyric theater among the youth who are our future audiences and patrons. ("Women's Committee Report," May 7, 1975)

In the following 1975-1976 season there were two performances of the

student opera, *The Barber of Seville*. However, the COC experienced problems with rising costs, low ticket prices, and the lack of government grants. The only solution was to increase fund-raising efforts. Three performances of Puccini's *La Boheme* were presented to students in the 1976-1977 season. Performances began on September 30, 1976 with ticket prices increased from \$ 2.50 to \$ 3.00 per student.

Unfortunately, *La Boheme* was the last student matinee opera for a while. Mr. Lotfi Mansouri had taken over as General Director that season and recognized the two main problems that had persisted in previous years. Expenses far exceeded revenues, even though most shows had been sold out. Secondly, the school boards insisted upon the 3:30 p. m. start time, and the COC reluctantly agreed although they experienced little lead time to set up the evening show following the end of the afternoon opera. The Assistant Co-ordinator of Music of the Halton Board of Education, Mrs. Joan Clark, wrote a letter to Mansouri stating her disappointment that the student matinees were being discontinued. She was concerned that the COC would not be developing audiences for the future:

Since the students who now attend opera performances are the audiences of the future, any decision to cut out the student matinee should be carefully considered. It would be too bad if we cut them off from an opportunity to become acquainted with the world of opera. (Letter to Mansouri from Clark, February 18, 1977)

Almost one month later Mr. Mansouri replied agreeing that the introduction to opera was of vital importance. For that reason, he told her that he had decided to have four early evening student performances instead of the traditional afternoon matinees. As a result, the operas would continue into the next season but would be offered as dress rehearsals during the early evening hours (Letter to Clark from Mansouri, March 14, 1977).

The new dress rehearsal format for student operas gained momentum. During the 1977-1978 season four dress rehearsals were presented to students. In the 1978-1979 season, there were previews for six major productions, with 5,461

students in attendance.

Elementary Children's Opera Performances

The Junior Women' Committee (Jr. WOC), a branch of the WOC, served a major role in the sponsorship of both the children's opera at the MacMillan Theatre (performed by the Opera Department of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto) and the newly introduced puppet opera performed in the schools. The presentations at the MacMillan Theatre had been held annually in the early part of December and had been well attended by Metropolitan Toronto school children since the 1960s. The number of performances varied from year to year, and performances were frequently sold out due to their popularity.

The Jr. WOC devoted many volunteer hours in the 1970s and were consistent in their role and purpose throughout the decade: "It is the fulfillment of one of our major purposes, the introduction of children to opera and therefore for us, a significant development" ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 18, 1971). This theme was reiterated yearly.

The Jr. WOC sponsored the children's opera, *The Little Sweep*, in the 1970-1971 season, raising a sum of \$9,772 which it presented to the COC. Nine performances were given, and 7,000 tickets sold to children from elementary Metropolitan Toronto schools for about \$1.50. The Opera Department of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto performed the opera along with a mandatory professional orchestra and were conducted by Dr. Boyd Neel. According to the Jr. WOC Chairman, the children responded well to *The Little Sweep* as they "hooted like owls, cooed like doves, vocally splashed bath water about and otherwise happily responded to the exhortations of the conductor, Dr. Boyd Neel, in this appealing audience-participation opera" ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 18, 1971).

The 1971-1972 season was an exciting time for the Jr. WOC. For the first time, the committee produced audio cassettes of the children's opera from the MacMillan Theatre and placed them into the Learning Centres of schools across

Toronto.

Although there is no evidence to indicate if there was an opera shown in the 1971-1972 season, there was evidence of the Committee's commitment: "Jr. Women's Committee remains a vital organization with potential for growth and development" ("Junior Women's Committee Report," March 3, 1972).

The interest of the Jr. WOC and the growth of opera education was evident during the 1972-1973 season when it participated in the the first ever "Arts in Education Showcase." The event was held at the St. Lawrence Centre where the Jr. WOC displayed pictures of the children's operas they had supported over the past 10 years ("Junior Women's Committee Report," April 3, 1973).

The Jr. WOC was pleased that the Canada Council for the Arts issued a grant in March 1973 for the Canadian composer John Rea to write a children's opera entitled *The Prisoners Play*. The opera was to be produced in May at the MacMillan Theatre, University of Toronto, and again have the sponsorship of the Jr. Women's Committee. This grant was the first the Jr. Women's Committee had received ("Junior Women's Committee Report," April 3, 1973).

After 1973, no evidence of the production of *The Prisoners Play* or any other productions sponsored by the Jr. WOC exists. It may be that the children's operas were discontinued.

Elementary Children's Puppet Opera Performances

Although what happened to the successful elementary children's opera productions held at the MacMillan Theatre is a mystery, it was fortunate that the puppet opera initiated by the Jr. WOC volunteers in the late 1960s began their productions in 1970.

As a result of the vision, persistence, and numerous hours put in by volunteers, the first new puppet show, *Hansel and Gretel*, began its first set of performances in the spring of 1970. The free program was presented four times weekly and included a combination of opera and puppets. The program was presented as puppet opera for primary-aged children in the schools. Each show was followed by a question-and-answer period and, within a short time, the

enthused Committee received numerous requests to perform more presentations of *Hansel and Gretel*.

The 1971 Annual Report described the opening season of the puppet operas and indicated that it had taken a year to design, construct, and produce the show with only a minimal amount of help from experts. The Convener of the puppet program, Mrs. Malcolm MacLennon reported:

Since September, our little puppets have been on the road four times a week, trouped by our own girls. 3,000 children have seen them in public schools, and we are similarly booked until Spring. It is a great satisfaction to know that we have been able to offer to children this opportunity to be enchanted by the story and lovely music of Humperdinck's great work. ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 18, 1971)

The success of the 1970-1971 season carried over and the show continued through to the 1971-1972 season. By this time the production had been seen by over 40,000 children, including special performances for families at the O'Keefe Centre.

By the summer of 1972, a new puppet opera was in the making. The Jr. WOC had been busy designing its own sets, costumes, and puppets while making the props and staging rehearsals in preparation for *The Little Sweep*.

The first performance was held at the O'Keefe Centre on September 16, 1972 and experienced four oversold Saturday performances. The *Little Sweep* then toured throughout the Scarborough Board of Education schools until the end of June, 1973, while *Hansel and Gretel* toured during January and February 1973. When the tour of *Hansel and Gretel* concluded, the production was loaned to the Oakville Opera Guild branch for touring in its area schools.

By the end of the busy 1972-1973 season, the Jr. WOC had sponsored two puppet opera productions seen by over 60,000 children, when combining the school and theatre performances. The Jr. WOC had also participated in the Arts in Education Showcase at the St. Lawrence Centre and had displayed pictures of their puppet opera theatre productions.

The Little Sweep continued to be shown through the 1973-1974 season.

Along with the basic Jr. WOC purpose of exposing young children to opera, the volunteers also believed that the puppet shows served two purposes. The first was to promote a form of public relations for the COC, and the second was to serve as a means of fund raising. The puppet opera was reported as the "most successful venture, not only financially but in the achievement of education and audience building among young children, 100,000 of whom have been exposed to opera through this medium" ("Junior Women's Committee Report," April 4, 1974).

By the 1974-1975 season, momentum had picked up as the puppet opera was being presented for two performances a week in the York, East York, and Toronto Boards of Education schools. At the Annual 1975 meeting, the Jr. WOC chairman announced:

We are more encouraged than ever that our third production, which is now in the making, will be equally, if not more successful. Because of the continuing demand for our puppets, our third opera is being mounted by professionals and will be manned by our own volunteers. ("Junior Women's Committee Report," May 7, 1975)

Followed by their commitment to sponsor a new puppet opera for the 1975-1976 season, the Jr. WOC succeeded in presenting *The Little Sweep* for two performances a week for the North York Board of Education until December 1975 ("Junior Women's Committee Report," April 5, 1976).

The Jr. WOC 1976 "Annual Report" provided children's responses to the puppet opera performances: "It gives us much satisfaction to see how the ever popular medium of puppets continues to delight young children and serves the purpose of introducing them to opera. Since 1970, over 200,000 children have seen our productions" (April 5, 1976).

To produce the new puppet opera in 1976 entitled *Jack in the Beanstalk*, professionals were hired to create the puppets, sets, props, and a tape recording while the volunteers rehearsed the various roles and staging for many weeks over the summer. The opera premiered at the O'Keefe for four Saturday mornings and was sold out with a profit. ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 3, 1977)

Jack in the Beanstalk was presented to the East York Board of Education until May 1976 and continued during the 1976-1977 season, with eight performances at

the O'Keefe Centre in the autumn of 1976 and a profit of \$1,100. *The Little Sweep* continued to be shown in the Toronto schools on Wednesdays. Also, the Hamilton and the Regional Arts Council decided to provide funds, along with a grant from Wintario, to support the new Puppet Opera Players from the Hamilton region. The Puppet Opera Players successfully gave 22 performances to about 2,950 young children in their region.

At the February, 1977 Annual Meeting, the Jr. WOC described how they had honoured Geiger-Torel who had retired as COC General Director at the end of the 1975-1976 season.

After his very interesting and humorous musical and dramatic analysis of *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*, we had the opportunity to present Dr. Torel with a gift as a token of our thanks and appreciation for what he had done for Opera in Canada. ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 3, 1977)

Unfortunately, shortly after the presentation to Geiger-Torel by the Women's Committee, Geiger-Torel died suddenly on October 6, 1976, weeks before his formal retirement celebration was to be held.

During the same Annual meeting in February, the Jr. WOC Chairman also shared the Committee's progress:

As in previous years, the Junior Women's Committee's education program demanded the majority of our time and energy. Every Wednesday we performed our puppet operas in schools throughout Metropolitan Toronto and this year we had been asked by several schools to put on additional performances resulting in a very rewarding year both financially, and in the response to our young audiences. I am pleased to report that our puppet operas have been booked by the school boards for the remainder of the 1977 school year.

The puppet shows continued into the next season (1977-1978) with *Jack in the Beanstalk* manned by the volunteers. A newly revised version of the original puppet opera of *Hansel and Gretel* was already underway as new puppets were being professionally made, and the original cassettes distributed to the Resource Centres in the schools in the early 1970s were being re-recorded with new narration ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 2, 1978).

During the same season, the Hamilton Opera Guild, under the leadership of

the President, Dr. George Montgomery, took on the responsibility of presenting puppet opera within his region. As a result of his initiative, over 5,000 children attended the show in 1977.

Jack in the Beanstalk successfully continued through to the 1978-1979 season, and, during this time, Mrs. Gisela Berchtold, the puppet convener for the new version of *Hansel and Gretel* announced that preparations were being made to perform the opera in the Toronto primary school classrooms by Spring 1980 ("Junior Women's Committee Report," February 2, 1978).

At the Annual Meeting on February, 3, 1978, Mrs. Carol Lanning, Chairman of the Jr. WOC, provided an updated committee progress report: "We are now 'educating' the children in East York Board and will complete the year in Richmond Hill and North York" ("Junior Women's Committee Report"). The 1970s was a decade of resounding success for the Jr. WOC.

COC Link with Prologue to the Performing Arts Tours

While the puppet shows began to experience growth and success in the 1970s with the Jr. Women's Committee at the helm, the successful Prologue to the Performing Arts opera productions, presented in the Toronto and area schools by COC performers on tour, also continued to experience growth.

The COC Planning Committee, which met approximately eight times a year, had been responsible for keeping a close watch over the planning of the Prologue opera productions, even though Prologue to the Performing Arts, as an outside agency focused on bringing a variety of arts programs to students in Ontario.

In each of the available Prologue to the Performing Arts brochures, a clear program purpose was published. The 1972-1973 brochure stated: "In our short history, students have been imaginatively entertained and creatively stimulated by fine professional performers. To assist boards of education in this vital area of learning experiences is the sole continuing purpose of Prologue to the Performing Arts" (Prologue to the Performing Arts Brochure, 1972-1973).

The first opera, *The Boor*, was already being presented between November

16 and December 19, 1969. The 1970 opera tours began on January 5, 1970 and continued until March 20, 1970. In total, 158 performances were given.

After the tour, Prologue Executive Chairman, Mrs. B. Scott, wrote Geiger-Torel commending the COC for the production and said the committee thought that both casts were a good choice: "We have enjoyed our association with you very much these past four years and are very appreciative of the care you take in initiating children into the performing arts" (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Scott, 1970).

At the conclusion of the production of *The Boor* in Spring 1970, a Prologue tour report was submitted by Miss Mina Orenstein, the show stage manager. She described her experience with Prologue noting that her first experience as a stage manager had been enjoyable and rewarding. She also said that, over the course of time, the cast and crew had become good friends and had worked together in a friendly atmosphere. Mina Orenstein believed that *The Boor* had been a well chosen work and said that after 153 performances, only three negative experiences arose.

The fact that through Prologue, the opera is reaching kids who have never had the chance to see it is, by any scale, important, and, hopefully beneficial to the kids; the fact that these as well as all those kids who had hitherto refused to go to or have anything to do with Opera, actually enjoyed it and found (during the question period) that the singers were really people, is just immeasurably valuable. (Orenstein, "Prologue Tour Report," 1970)

Orenstein described the various difficulties which were encountered in the 1969 to 1970 season. Her first concern was that almost two thirds of the schools were unable to provide a tuned piano as requested in the information package. Secondly, many schools were confused about who the opera group with the ballet group was. Other problems arose when a number of high schools had booked shows during examination week, when students needed peace and quiet. Orenstein also found that when the stage manager arrived at a school, school personnel often knew nothing about their performance, even though Prologue had confirmed the date by phone (Orenstein, "Prologue Tour Report," 1970).

As a result of the experienced difficulties Orenstein suggested that separate

information packages be sent to schools outlining the needs of each arts group. She also suggested having tuned pianos, booking high schools when it wasn't exam time, and having the stage manager phone the school 2 days prior to the event, instead of Prologue so the manager would know who the contact person was. Finally she suggested it would be valuable to have a Prologue representative visit and speak to the principal of a school when it was their first time hosting an opera performance (Orenstein, "Prologue Tour Report," 1970).

During the 1970-1971 season, *Rita* had 133 student performances for junior and senior secondary schools. Performances were given at 10:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. each day, with the tour dates running from November 16 to December 18, 1970 and January 4 to March 20, 1971.

During the 1971-1972 season, *The Spirit of the Fundy*, a work newly commissioned with funding assistance from the Ontario Arts Council, premiered with less than half as many performances as the year before—only 55 shows performed between the January 4 and March, 1972 season (Letter to Prologue from Geiger-Torel, December, 1972).

In January 1973 Prologue reminded Geiger-Torel that it was the COC's third year in a row seeking commissioned works and Ontario Arts Council funds since he had previously applied to Prologue with a proposal for a libretto for *The Glove* (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Prologue, January 3, 1973). Prologue approved the new libretto outline, and the Ontario Arts Council awarded Mr. George Jonas with a \$200 grant for the newly commissioned libretto for a student opera (Letter to Jonas from Prologue, January 31, 1973). Jonas was asked to submit the libretto to the COC by March 31st, 1973. He was also expected to co-operate with the commissioned composer Mr. Polgar (Letter to Jonas from Prologue, February 16, 1973).

In the 1972 to 1973 season, *The Old Man and the Thief* was presented for a total of 59 performances, almost the same number as the year before. Of the total, 44 performances were held in the Toronto area, and the remainder toured out-of-town to the cities of Guelph, Oshawa, Peterborough, and the counties of Essex,

Kent, and Wellington. Two casts with eight soloists presented the shows from January 24 to March 1, 1973.

During one of the shows, a performer named Miss Carrol Anne Curry, reported that when the opera ended, a student asked her how she moved her mouth to the recording. Curry was astounded with the comment and proceeded to show the girl that she sang on her own without a recording playing during her performance (personal communication, March 27, 1973).

The 1972 to 1973 season was documented as an exceptional year since approximately 64 Prologue Evaluation Forms were filled out with comments and suggestions. Nine samples of school responses chosen randomly from the evaluation forms follow:

- Weston Collegiate reported:
I was thoroughly unimpressed. The object of the opera was to excite an interest in Opera. It didn't. What it did do, though, was leave the audience in a bored stupor. The male lead was unbelievable. I felt the show was thrown together at the last minute. The production as a whole needed co-ordination. (Prologue Evaluation Form, February 1, 1973)
- St. Roch school reported: "Students reacted enthusiastically to sections they could hear. Students talked during performance because of an inability to hear" (Prologue Evaluation Form, January 26, 1973).
- St. Monica school reported: "All of us liked the performance. Good props, excellent acting"(Prologue Evaluation Form, January 29, 1973).
- Holy Rosary Hall said: "very poorly chosen for grades 7 and 8 and didn't find it appropriate"(Prologue Evaluation Form, January 29, 1973).
- Mr. Ingall from George Harvey C. I. said: "favorable" (Prologue Evaluation Form, January 31, 1973).
- Principal H. S. Vaughn from York Memorial C. I. wrote: "many enjoyed it with some risqué bits" (Prologue Evaluation Form, February 1st, 1973).
- Mary Holmes, from Cosburn Avenue High School, reported: "The students reacted enthusiastically. The operas have been an unqualified success at our school from the beginning of Prologue" (Prologue Evaluation Form, February

5, 1973).

- R. H. King C. I. reported: "There was criticism from the kids that they couldn't hear all the words. In general they really enjoyed the performance" (Prologue Evaluation Form, February 5, 1973).
- The Music Head, Mr. C. Pollen from W. A. Porter Collegiate reported: "Audience was quite attentive, and showed appreciation for the performances. Its length did tire them" (Prologue Evaluation Form, February 7, 1973).

The opera had mixed reviews.

In the same season, a five-page advertising pamphlet was sent out to the schools. However, the document appeared to include much more detail about Prologue than about the COC's opera performances for students (Prologue to the Performing Arts Brochure, 1972).

In the 1972-1973 season, there were concerns about having the appropriate funding to commission and produce new works. Geiger-Torel wrote a letter to Mr. Atkins, Treasurer of Prologue to the Performing Arts to discuss budgeting difficulties with respect to this issue:

To make a budget for a work which has not yet been written is an impossible task. On the other hand to force authors to write a work which must fit a budget means easily killing imagination and inventiveness. I hope we won't face unpleasant surprises. (Letter to Atkins from Geiger-Torel, February 26, 1973)

Geiger-Torel also told Atkins that he was concerned that there were not as many Prologue shows being booked and shown as in previous years. Geiger-Torel expressed his interest in co-operating with Prologue and, as he had done many times in the past, he stated that the "shorter our annual activity for Prologue is, the more dangerous it becomes as far as performance quality is concerned" (Letter to Atkins from Geiger-Torel, February 26, 1973).

Earlier in the same month, Mr. A. MacKinley, Music Department Head at R. H. King C. I. wrote on his Prologue evaluation his concerns with the programs:

I have been concerned about the Scarborough Board of Ed. false economy resulting in the last years complete absence of Prologue and this year's reduced schedule. Prologue fills a great need here in the grade 8-9 years, and I hope they' ll soon return to the Play, Ballet and Opera complete diet next year. (Prologue Evaluation Form, February 5, 1973)

A few months later on April 24, 1973 Geiger-Torel was invited to a new venue entitled Arts in Education Day, a program sponsored by Prologue to be held at the Donalda Club in Toronto on May 14, 1973. The artistic directors of the invited performing companies were asked to present a short 5-to 6-minute presentation to describe their next season's program and open a dialogue. Music Co-ordinators and Supervisors from different Southern Ontario school Boards attended and were asked to become involved in the afternoon discussion period which addressed the following topics:

A) You've lost your arts budget, How can you keep your arts programs alive, How can Prologue assist? B) You've retained your arts budget, How can students be introduced to the arts? Should the funds be handled by the individual schools or centrally with Prologue's help if necessary? C) Let's look at program content, Are there areas to be improved or new programs to be offered? Should traditional works continue or is it OK for Prologue to continue to commission new works? D) We may have overlooked an area of concern, Is there anything that needs to be discussed? (Booklet: Arts in Education Day, May 14, 1973).

Shortly after the Arts in Education program had occurred, a new initiative for the COC and Prologue was published in the 1973-1974 Prologue brochure; there was going to be a variety of opera programs presented for all children in the schools instead of the traditional Prologue opera tour. The new shows consisted of a grades K-3 show entitled "Jan Rubes Makes Music," at a cost of \$135 per show. Another was called "S. A. T. B." (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) for grades 4-6, at a cost of \$340. The grades 7-13 show was called "The COC Program" with a charge of \$500 (Prologue to the Performing Arts brochure, 1973).

Following each of the Prologue performances, a 15-minute question-and-answer period was held when the singers sat "on the lip of the stage" and tried to answer students' questions as "directly and honestly" as they could. Questions

included: “How did you get to sing so loud? or Will your voice break glass?” (Curry, personal communication, March 27, 2003).

After a performance of “S. A. T. B.,” Curry, a singer with the group remembered one boy stood up and asked: “Why do call yourself the ‘STABS?’, like we were a rock group! Another time they said, ‘Like are you really famous?’ We all laughed. ‘You’re really good, but if you are so good, what are doing singing for us?’ (personal communication, March 27, 2003).

During the show, “Jan Rubes Makes Music,” Mr. Rubes asked the students if they were having a good time and were enjoying the singing. He told the children there was a way to show their appreciation and proceeded to show them how to clap. At first, his co-worker, Curry, thought it odd but soon she realized that he was teaching the children to respond because “from the 1970s on, were children who only understood entertainment as television, which requires no response at all” (Curry, personal communication, March 27, 2003).

The 1973 promotional pamphlet explained Prologues’ understanding of the success of the educational programs:

Not only have the performances been hits, but the students have also had the opportunity of asking questions and learning more of the professional disciplines involved. We have helped develop to enrich the learning experiences of our children, which prompted those standing ovations in schools throughout the province. (Prologue to the Performing Arts Brochure, 1973)

That year, the reactions of the students to the performances were:

I would say they were invariably captivated. They weren’t used to hearing trained voices for one thing, so sometimes at the beginning they would giggle because the sounds would not conform to what they knew, but invariably they would become very attentive. They would really enjoy it and be happy. (Curry, personal communication, March 27, 2003)

Curry also remembered the reactions of the teachers: “The kids were way more receptive than the teachers. The teachers were often very inhibited around the performers. We had the attention and love of these kids, whereas there was an element of fear and jealousy among the teachers” (personal communication, March

27, 2003).

Prologue sent a letter to Geiger-Torel at the end of June, 1973 explaining the budget difficulties and reduction in bookings. Only seven opera performances had been booked for the 1973-1974 season compared to 40 performances at the same time the previous year. Prologue said they would need at least 27 performances over a 3-week period to make the operation viable:

From this, we have come to the very conclusion that we will not be able to offer opera to the schools this year. Look on this as a one season gap in our association and we will do everything to develop the market for opera in the schools for the 1974/75 season. (Letter to Geiger-Torel from Prologue, June 26, 1973).

The season was canceled. Geiger-Torel expressed his disappointment with this announcement: "I hope that in 1974/75 we can again be a part of Prologue (Letter to Prologue from Geiger-Torel, June 28, 1973).

Although it must have been a disappointment to all those involved, the COC Planning Committee remained optimistic about future affiliations with Prologue and said that their purpose remained "creating new audience development projects of all kinds, especially for student audiences. This includes Prologue which may resume its operatic activities in 1974" ("Minutes" from the COC Planning Committee Meeting, November 20, 1973).

Miss Mary Carr, the administrator for Prologue wrote to the COC in January 1974 regarding the future of COC Prologue opera shows: "I wish I could predict what the response will be next season, but right now can only hope that education budgets will not be as restricted. We shall have to play the guessing game once more" (Letter to the COC from Carr, January 23, 1974).

Prologue once again updated the COC by letter regarding the next season's COC Prologue performances. This time Carr wrote: "I will be calling towards the end of the month with a progress report on next season's sales" (Letter to the COC from Carr, May 30, 1974). Finally, the new opera, *The Glove*, was ready, and Geiger-Torel received a letter of congratulations from Prologue. Polgar and Jonas were also congratulated for their new opera, *The Glove*, which the Prologue

committee believed was best suited for senior students.

By October 17, 1974, Mr. Jan Rubes, the COC's new Touring and Program Development Director, was in charge of the Prologue tours for the COC and returned the Prologue Contract that had been sent to him outlining the tour details for *The Glove*. Since the production was ready for 1975, a schedule was provided with the performance booked from February 23 to March 14, 1975.

On February 2, 1975, Rubes reported: "In a young country (operatically speaking), the entire future of opera depends on building audiences by education, by PR, by selling opera with every and any means" ("Touring and Program Development Report," February 2, 1975). Rubes believed the Prologue tours to schools and the two yearly secondary school student operas held at the O'Keefe Centre had been unsatisfactory. He thought that valuable time and ground had been lost as far as educating children sufficiently about opera and stated that if the COC didn't do something soon, something else would soon fill the void. Rubes clearly expressed his views about how he believed the education program should be structured and evolve; he felt the present one wasn't working effectively. His rationale and suggestions are summarized below:

1. Since the COC had already received grants and had toured throughout Southern Ontario to children of all ages in past years, the best way to bring opera education back to students would be through a program he called OPERATION Ontario. His suggestion was based on careful analysis of past programs, and he encouraged the Planning Committee to consider his idea.
2. Rubes also wanted to find funds in order to have a small orchestra play with the Prologue tour instead of just piano accompaniment. He believed that "in school, programs should be preparatory programs, operatic excerpts programs, and amusing instructional programs dealing with vocal and operatic literature."
3. To foster music education, Rubes thought the next step was to have the COC touring production perform for a full week at student matinees held at the Edward Johnson or St. Lawrence buildings. As a result of the

endeavour, about 6,000 students would be brought in for \$1.50 each with a subsidy provided of another \$1.50 each. Evening performances could also be added.

4. Rubes further suggested a permanent educational program should be maintained for the new opera members who would have a permanent home, a permanent staff of coaches, singing supervisors, and first rate stage managers.

5. The last major plan would be to commission new works with an accompanying orchestra in order to showcase for Prologue or the Stratford stage (Touring and Program Development Report, February 2, 1975).

The Glove was presented for 29 successful performances between February 23 and March 14, 1975. It was such a success that it was produced as a CBC film directed by Mr. Alan Lund. *The Glove* was booked for a second Prologue year for the 1975-1976 season. Seventy-one performances were presented from November 12 to December 12, 1975 and from February 2 to February 13, 1976.

Rubes' position as Touring and Program Director, held from 1974-1976, had to be discontinued due to major cutbacks in the COC's budget. He was asked to continue as a consultant for the COC. However, at termination, he was highly recognized for his contribution to the cultural life of Canada as a performer of 26 years and was nominated by Geiger-Torel to the Order of Canada.

In the 1976-1977 season, planning was accomplished at least 3 years in advance, at the COC Planning Committee's request. A possible new Resident Artist Program was also being considered, pending funding. Curry became involved in part of this process when an Ensemble Residency Program was considered. She believed that since she was the only singer on staff who had been well trained in the American system of arts education as an affiliate singer, somewhat similar to an Ensemble Residency Program, she could speak first-hand concerning the benefits:

I believed that it was not only beneficial to the people who listened but it was highly beneficial to the young artists. So I spent a lot of time talking, especially to John, about what an Ensemble would do, not only for the singers, but for the company, he became very convinced

of the idea and from that grew the COC Ensemble. (personal communication, March 27, 2003)

During the 1976-1977 season, *The Barber of Seville* was presented for the COC Prologue tour; 46 performances were held from January 17 to February 18, 1977. In the 1977-1978 season, a 4-week tour of *The Barber of Seville* was presented to around 45,000 Ontario secondary school students. One of the singers, Curry, recalled an incident after the performers arrived at one school. The baritone had laryngitis, and nobody else was able to sing in his place. Curry commented:

Okay, here's what we're going to do. I'm going to tell the story and everybody else has to sing and every time he has to sing, I'm going to speak what it was he would say. Well, it was hysterical, because it was so off the wall. Everybody was as high as a kite and the kids had a great time. We had a great time and by chance, Lotfi was at the show with a whole lot of subscribers who were going to donate to the school program. Of course it could have been a total disaster, but it turned out to be very funny and by the afternoon, we had an excellent replacement for the sick baritone. (personal communication, March 27, 2003)

Curry believed that whether a school was able to hold a performance of Prologue or not "had everything to do, I would say, with the importance the principal placed on it, rather more than even an individual teacher" (personal communication, March 27, 2003).

Although Prologue advocated enriching the experiences of children, the 1978 Report by the General Director did not mention the future of opera education for children. There was only one four-line reference to the future. The report continued:

We look forward to expanding our repertoire, and increasing our contribution to the cultural life of the community. However, more than ever before I realize that the company's growth in the future is essentially strongly based on the community's support and depends vitally on private and corporate fund raising. ("General Director's Report," February 2, 1978)

By Spring 1978, an extra grant of \$83,000 from Wintario had been awarded to the COC for the Resident Artist program, a new initiative which had initially been discussed in the 1976-1977 season.

The Residency Program was to involve a selected group of talented singers who would have an opportunity to develop their careers in Canada while visiting and performing in an Ontario community for several days. The singers would be responsible for presenting a series of workshops especially designed for children and adults. Prologue would act as the booking agency.

While discussions were underway in the 1978-1979 season, *The Magic Mozart* was presented in affiliation with Prologue in 26 performances to around 10,400 secondary school students. Six other performances of *The Magic Mozart* were also held for other age groups; a total of 12,800 students saw the production.

A detailed ten-page list was printed and presumably distributed to the participating Prologue COC artists. The list included performance dates, performer phone numbers, the school contact person, and detailed directions to the host school (COC Prologue Show Information List, 1979).

The Magic Mozart was a success and was carried over to the next season as a Prologue production. The out-of-town tour began on October 22, 1979, performing in Guelph, Woodstock, Sudbury, New Liskeard, Timmins, Peterborough, and Lakefield, Ontario. The Metro tour began on November 9, 1979, and Toronto schools such as Second St. Jr. and Middle School, Franklin Horner Middle School, and Richview Collegiate Institute had an opportunity to see the show.

According to the company manager, Mrs. Muriel Smith, *The Magic Mozart* involved some wonderful singers. They had put together a story of the life of Mozart from childhood and used the music from many of his operas. It was with piano and four singers. The singers were Janet Stubbs, Bill Silva, Colleen Letourneau and the tenor Barry Stilwell. This was before there was an Ensemble and they wanted to start to move more in this direction. (personal communication, March 24, 2003)

Smith thought *The Magic Mozart* was funny and had a lot of music in it. She recalled the question-and-answer period after each show and overall said she enjoyed the whole experience of traveling with the shows (personal communication, March 24, 2003).

Opera Guilds–Prologue Tours

Another influence in the advancement of the COC educational programs was the extra assistance provided by the COC Opera Guilds from cities across the province of Ontario.

The first documented information concerning the collaboration of the Opera Guild and Prologue appeared in the 1970-1971 season. According to the report, the Kitchener-Waterloo branch acted as co-ordinators for Prologue in the local schools:

Branch members worked long and hard to promote this event and thus ensure its success. Following the performance, Mrs. Henry C. Krug, President, was hostess at a supper party at her home for the entire touring company of performers, orchestra, stage hands and a number of out-of-town visitors. ("COC Opera Guild Report," February 18, 1971)

Up to the 1974-1975 season, every branch of the Opera Guild had been involved in education for opera in one way or another. For example, the city of Oakville sent students to the student performances in Toronto. Barrie planned a creative approach to schools in the district. Hamilton planned puppet opera shows. Peel assisted with secondary school performances. Peterborough held an educational evening of opera, and Windsor presented the opera *Little Red Riding Hood* for children.

For the first time, on March 25, 1975, the Board of the Canadian Opera Guild Association ratified the new purpose of the Opera Guild under Article 11 of the Canadian Guild Constitution. Article 11 spelled out the Guild's responsibility for the creation and administration of educational, informational, and audience building programs ("Canadian Opera Guild Constitution," Article 11, 1975).

The Opera Guilds were recognized at the May 7, 1975 Annual Meeting: "A vote of thanks is certainly in order to the Branches—they work under difficult circumstances, in areas that are not in constant touch with the on-going activities of opera. They are doing a valuable educational job" ("COC Opera Guild Report," May 7, 1975).

During the 1975-1976 season there were seven active branches of the

Canadian Opera Guild representing the cities of Barrie, Hamilton, Niagara Region, Oakville, Peel region, Peterborough, and Windsor. These had grown to include 580 members.

The Hamilton branch rented the sets from the Jr. WOC puppet opera and trained its own volunteers to perform in the schools. The Guild had been working closely with the Hamilton-Wentworth Board of Education and had sought funding so that they could become more involved with education for younger children through the media of puppet opera.

The Oakville branch subsidized 384 students, while the Peel branch gave \$300 to bus 80 students to the secondary School Performances in Toronto at O'Keefe Centre. In another season, the Oakville Branch partially subsidized 406 students and escorts to two operas. A total of 340 students representing ten Oakville schools attended the matinee of *La Boheme* in September and contributed \$71.35 towards the Herman Geiger-Torel Memorial Fund.

The Peterborough branch arranged for 40 members of the Youth Chorus to attend the opera, *Die Fledermaus*, in Toronto. The Windsor branch sponsored 45 students to a performance of the *Barber of Seville* performed by the Michigan Opera Company in Detroit. The initial response to the idea of the trip was so good that the guild sponsored another 45 students. The possibility of making this first trip into an annual event for students was to become a reality.

Conclusion

Support for the growth of opera programs for students ranging from elementary school to high school ages grew through the 1970s. The success was a direct result of the assistance of the COC directors, the WOC, the Jr. WOC, the COC Planning Committee, the COC Touring and Program Development Director, Prologue to the Performing Arts and, the affiliated Opera Guilds in Ontario.

Particular factors contributed to both the growth and the hindrance of the programs. Growth of the secondary and junior high school student performances was experienced from the start of the 1970s as performances continued to sell out

with frequent waiting lists of schools wishing to attend a performance at low ticket prices. The decade started with the production of two performances per year and increased to six performances per year by the end of the decade. The WOC volunteered many hours and used publicity to help create high student attendance.

Similar problems which plagued the performances in the 1960s continued into the 1970s, but with some resolution. Most prevalent was the financial issue whereby the expenses could not be recovered from the revenue of the low ticket prices, used to attract students to the performances. Also, Canada Council grants provided to the COC had been cut considerably. Combined with the rising production costs, the loss of grants had made it difficult for the COC to keep up financially. The same show time dispute from the 1960s also continued into the 1970s as school boards insisted students only attend at 3:30 p.m. By providing a student matinee, the COC experienced more and more difficulty trying to re-arrange the set in time for a regular evening opera. Although matinees were often sold out, there still remained a large financial deficit. By 1977, the new General Director Mr. Lotfi Mansouri decreed that student shows were to cease but later changed his mind in view of complaints voiced by school boards. Performances were to continue in a different rehearsal format, offering students four operas during an early evening time.

The Jr. WOC's elementary school opera presentations held at the MacMillan theatre continued from the late 1960s with a high attendance for the nine performances in 1970. The students' positive reactions to the shows continued as the Jr. WOC produced audio tapes of the show to distribute to the Metro Toronto school libraries. Yet the growth of the programs took a sharp turn after a newly commissioned opera was performed in 1973. Since there is no record of performances after 1973, it is assumed that student operas for elementary students were discontinued at that time.

At the same time, the new Puppet opera, created and produced by the Jr. WOC, began in 1970 and became another source of opera presentation for elementary students; these productions were held in the home school instead of the MacMillan theatre. The popularity of the shows contributed to their growth. By 1977,

100,000 students had seen a puppet opera performance in their Metro Toronto school or in a school in the surrounding cities, thanks in part to the volunteering COC opera guilds. As a result, the Jr. WOC received grants, made profits, and in 1977, were able to produce cassette tapes for Metro Toronto school libraries.

During the 1970s, Prologue to the Performing Arts continued as an ally and supporter of the COC school opera programs as it promoted and booked shows both within and outside the Metro Toronto area. Geiger-Torel's keen interest and close working relationship with Prologue, combined with the 2-year pro-active leadership of the Touring and Development Director, Rubes, and encouraging reports from students and teachers, contributed to the continuation and growth of the program. Unfortunately, although the decade had started with as many as 133 performance bookings in a season, the number dwindled annually to the point where the COC and Prologue reached a critical state. In one season, there weren't enough bookings to justify performances for the year, and it became questionable as to whether there would even be enough bookings in the following year. Shows resumed but they failed to gain the momentum they had once experienced.

Even though the 1973 COC President acknowledged that there were educational goals for student programs, specifics were not mentioned, and a clear mandate was not established.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The 1980s

Each of the founding establishments that supported the opera education for children will be examined for the nature and evolution of their programs. The WOC and Jr. WOC Committees continued their opera programs for students from the 1970s and reestablished their specific purposes. Prologue, which acted as an outside agency, maintained its relationship with the COC student opera presentations in the schools and soon dealt directly with the newly formed COC Ensemble and its Co-ordinator, Miss Irene Wronski. The local opera guilds provided assistance and support while the Opera America programs connected with the COC's educational programs.

By the start of the 1980s each of the affiliated groups had their own set of priorities and goals concerning opera education for students; however an overall educational mandate for the COC had not been established. Each group, nevertheless, influenced the development of opera education for students. The following initiatives will be addressed in this chapter:

1. secondary and junior high school student performances,
2. elementary children's puppet opera performances,
3. the COC and Prologue's alliance with COC Ensemble, and
4. initiatives of the Ensemble Co-ordinator and Opera America.

Secondary and Junior High School Student Performances

The Women's Committee (WOC) had provided opportunities for secondary students to see full opera productions at discounted rates starting in the last half of the 1950s. The WOC was a vital element in the growth of opera education for children providing the forerunner for all the student opera programs. However, very little information is available about their contributions in the 1980s once the COC Marketing Departments took on the task of promotion. There was only some information indicating the name of a dress rehearsal performance shown

to students in 1980. The student performances became

the marketing department's responsibility because it was a situation where they would have a number of tickets for a dress rehearsal for a main stage opera that would be available for purchase by teachers. Students would be seated in reserved seating sections, which is probably why the marketing department had to deal with it. It was Margaret Genevieve and her staff in the marketing department that dealt with that and they had a young fellow who actually created the study guides for those main stage productions. (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May 25, 2003)

There is no evidence of a student opera performance at O'Keefe Centre in the 1980-1981 season.

However, the WOC was still involved in COC activities because in June 1981, when the COC became incorporated, specific Objects of the Corporation were stated as the WOC's role—to promote and support opera in Canada, in particular the Canadian Opera Company: “to advance knowledge, and to develop an appreciation of opera by stimulating interest” (“Women's Committee Report,” October 22, 1981). The WOC was also responsible for providing improved opportunities for Canadian operatic talent and for overseeing the COC's fund raising. However, The Objects of the Corporation did not specify anything about opera education for children.

The character of the secondary school dress rehearsal opera productions changed significantly in 1983 when a new invention called *Surtitles* improved the enjoyment of the student opera performances. *Surtitles*, developed by the COC, were English translations of the words sung by the singers in the opera projected above the stage while the opera was underway. The children in the audience had “at least some idea as to what the people were saying to each other and what the opera meant and so on” (Leberg, personal communication, May 10, 2003).

The next evidence of opera for secondary school students was for the 1984-1985 season when it was announced that there would be five evening dress rehearsals offered for students at a price of \$4.00-\$5.00. *Il Trovatore* and *Tosca* were performed in the fall of 1984. *Candide* and *Faust* were performed in the winter of 1985. The *Barber of Seville* was performed in the spring of 1985.

Dress-rehearsal operas were also scheduled for students in the 1986-1987 season and advertised in the COC Educational services pamphlet. They were offered to grades 9-13 students for either a \$5.00 or \$6.00 admission fee, depending upon where the seat was located. The opera, *Macbeth*, began on September 16, 1986 and the opera *Lucia Di Lammermoor* closed on June 9, 1987.

As the COC continued to liaise with the schools, teachers were sent a letter advertising the secondary school opera productions for the 1988-1989 season by a COC Marketing Associate, Miss Carrol Chabot. The letter gave a brief history of the four operas being presented along with an offer to have complimentary opera study guides sent to the school. Student tickets were sold for \$8.00 per seat and were available from the school (Letter to Toronto teachers from Chabot, September 6, 1988).

Elementary Children's Puppet Opera Performances

The Jr. Women's Committee (Jr. WOC) provided volunteer assistance to student opera programs throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and into the early 1980s. The Jr. WOC consistently provided opera for young children through its sponsorship of children's performances, including puppet opera performances. The puppet operas, *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Little Sweep*, and *Beanstalk*, had been introduced to thousands of primary children throughout Metro Toronto. Mrs. Janet Lindsay, Jr. WOC Chairman, announced the purpose for her committee at the start of the decade: "Our primary objectives are education, audience building and the promotion of opera for children" ("Jr. Women's Committee Report," January 22, 1980).

By the end of 1980, the Jr. WOC announced that the group had been dedicated to "promoting education and audience building for over 15 years. Encouraging an appreciation of opera in children has been a special goal" ("Junior Women's Committee Report," December 4, 1980). Ms. Elisabeth Scarff, Chairman of the Jr. WOC reported that they were going to disband and merge with the Women's Committee in February 1981 and explained the reasons for the decision:

Although the puppet productions received a high degree of professionalism, we found school boards were increasingly reluctant to engage non-professional groups to appear in schools. Further, as with all volunteer groups, the Committee has been affected by the trend of young mothers to return to work when their children are of school age. ("Junior Women's Committee Report," December 4, 1980)

The news was unfortunate for the thousands of children who would lose an opportunity to see the famous puppet opera shows.

The COC and Prologue's Alliance with COC Ensemble

Although the puppet operas were no longer presented, Prologue to the Performing Arts continued shows for elementary and secondary students. Opera education was fostered through the alliance of the COC and the Prologue for the Performing Arts agency which occurred in the 1980s. Previously, Prologue represented different arts groups, including the COC's student operas. Prologue had demonstrated its capacity to connect the arts, young people, and professional artists. Prologue refined its objectives:

Our goal is to ensure that all children have an opportunity to experience the magic of live performances, and to this end we make available to school authorities, at a minimum cost, performing artists and performing arts companies of the highest professional standard. (Prologue for the Performing Arts Brochure, 1980-1981)

At the start of the decade, the COC

had a mandate to continue doing the school tours through Prologue to the Performing Arts....To show the commitment on the part of the COC, Lotfi Mansouri, Artistic Director, on a yearly basis: would sit down with the people from Prologue to the Performing Arts to very honestly discuss the choice of repertoire and to talk about any changes that were happening in the educational system that might influence his choice of repertoire for the school tours. Lotfi Mansouri was very interested in continuing to do development work through the school systems, as well as through communities. (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May 25, 2003).

Prologue in turn was interested in what the COC was presenting but left the choice of repertoire up to the COC. However, Prologue often "would come in toward the end of dress rehearsals and take a glance at what was actually being put on stage. There was a real trust between Prologue and Lotfi" (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May 25, 2003). Mansouri, was the COC's General

Director at the time. According to Wronski, the advance work to prepare for the Prologue tours was done about 1 year ahead. By that time, a number of issues had already been resolved: "How many weeks of Prologue can you afford? What time periods can we tour? How much can we charge per show? Then the production, Mr. John Leberg, Lotfi and myself would then determine what can we afford to do" (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May 25, 2003).

1980-1981. At the start of the 1980s the two key contacts at Prologue were Ms. Joan McCordick and Ms. Terry Kuhl. In addition, there were many other contributors: "On their Board of Directors were representatives from across the Province, and people that were educators, curriculum advisors, etc." (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May, 25, 2003).

In February 1980, the COC followed through its initial plan to present a pilot project whereby a COC In-Residence Tour Program would go to an Ontario town and perform from a few days to a week in local schools, churches, Rotary clubs, and libraries. The town of Bracebridge, Ontario and the surrounding area of Muskoka were chosen for the first tour. Introductory opera workshops, technical stage production, and wig with make-up applications were presented to all children from grades 4-6 in Muskoka schools. According to Mr. Michael Howell, Director of Publicity for the COC at the time, the pilot project in Muskoka was "in many ways the future of opera. This is a pilot project, and hopefully a starting point" (*Bracebridge Herald-Gazette*, 1980).

On April, 28, 1980, Mr. Walter Stothers from the COC announced that the Imperial Oil company would be the principal supporter of a second initiative, the new COC Ensemble. Ensemble, a resident-artist program would initially be comprised of eight young Canadian singers and one conductor: "With the establishment of the Ensemble, the COC moves into a new era of opera in Canada" (Speech to COC by Stothers, April 28, 1980). Mrs. Muriel Smith, Ensemble Tour Company Manager reported that "John had always wanted an Ensemble and Mr. Mansouri was keen on it and that of course is another of the great achievements of that era" (personal communication, March 24, 2003).

Miss Carrol Anne Curry recalled the consequences of developing an Ensemble and remembered how the COC mainstage tours which traveled across Canada were affected:

Soon after the Ensemble became more successful, the COC discontinued the touring company. The first Ensemble went on tour, and that meant that more senior artists lost work. But it was also time. It was the end of the touring era for change. Touring became too, too expensive. (personal communication, March 27, 2003)

The inception of Ensemble was exciting news for the COC. It would have a permanent Ensemble of year-round professional singers who would be able to appear in main productions and outreach programs and develop their personal musical and theatrical training: "Actually the whole concept of residency was adopted by dance companies and other organizations, because it was very successful in developing audiences" (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May 25, 2003).

Mr. John Leberg, Director of COC Operations, remembered when Mansouri first started telling him that he wanted to start a Resident Artist Program:

I remembered following him around the world, trying to find out what he meant by resident artist program. I had never heard of a resident artist program and over a period of years, we formulated what our residence—his idea of a resident artist program had been originally modeled on the Zurich model which was that you had senior artists who were resident members of the company. That cannot work in North America. Gradually, we developed the idea that really it should be the young artist—we get a group—we started bringing the program, which is the bridge between the kids who were just graduating university and a fully professional career. How can you make that gap vanish and that is how it started. (personal communication, May 10, 2003)

Mansouri held national auditions to hire the first permanent Ensemble singers and contracted them to begin July 1, 1980. Well known opera producer and coach, Mr. Stuart Hamilton, was the first music director to lead the Ensemble, and Wronski was hired as the full time Ensemble Administrator. Her role included tour management of the community residency projects, organization of in-school educational programs and services, and the administration of the advanced training program for the Ensemble singers. Wronski came to her new position in the COC

with expertise from her previous job as the Arts Liaison Officer for the Ontario Arts Council Touring Department and also from her post-graduate studies in management at the Banff Centre in Alberta: "The administrator of the Ensemble was also the marketing person at the time as well as she would send out materials to the community, the boards, the movers, the arts groups and say what we offered and and ask if we would come" (Smith, personal communication, March 24, 2003).

In the fall of 1980, Wronski sent a two-page promotional letter to different schools and organizations in Ontario she thought might be interested in hosting a Residency Program. Her letter began with the question, "Why a Residency?" She then described the benefits for an entire community:

Something for everyone because it combines all the performing and visual arts. The ensemble's variety of services and ability to relate to many age levels allow you to choose the right performance for the specific audience. The residency may even be a fund raiser. The revitalization of community spirit and strengthening of family bonds through working, laughing and learning together are just some of the unspoken benefits. (Letter to out-of-town schools from Wronski, September, 1980)

Page two of her letter was directed to the schools and church groups. Opera was described as entertainment with

magic...communicating a story through music. It is rare that artists have the skills to entertain as well as educate. The education of children should not be viewed as an experience which only occurs in the classroom setting. As teachers, since you are no doubt concerned with the ongoing "learning process," you will find the Ensemble exciting entertainment as well as a unique educational tool. (Letter to out-of-town schools from Wronski, September, 1980)

The letter further explained the benefits for children when working directly with artists and explained that the program would "care about the long-term welfare and education of your young people, since they will blossom into the artists and audience of our future." The letter also referred to the success of the Muskoka opera week-long pilot program and closed with a desire to be invited to the teacher's school for a day during the Residence tour (Letter to out-of-town schools from Wronski, September, 1980).

Prior to Wronski's promotional letter, Prologue had also been promoting the upcoming season in their 1980-1981 brochure, which described the two opera programs to be presented in Toronto. The first, *Jan Rubes Sings*, for Grades K- 6 was described as an opera singer who sings songs from his repertoire. The second, *Madama Butterfly* for Grades 7-13, was described as a presentation with costumes and sets, accompanied by piano and with a cast of four. The price to sponsor the opera was \$365 per school. The brochure stated that 70% of the funding for the shows came from sponsors, and 30% of it was provided for by an Ontario Arts Council grant. Ms. Janet Kendrick, music consultant with the Oxford County Board of Education, was quoted in the 1980-1981 brochure:

It's marvelous that there *is* a Prologue. Most children today don't get an opportunity to see live performances. As educators, we must ensure that they *do* have this opportunity and present them with only the *best*. My sincerest applause and thanks to Prologue and to the Ontario Arts Council for having such productions available for our children. (Prologue to the Performing Arts Brochure, 1980-1981)

Prologue booked the Ensemble to perform for 25 schools in Toronto for the 1980-1981 season with an abridged version of *Madama Butterfly*. As the Ensemble traveled from Cornwall to Chatham and north to Chapleau and Timmins, the two Residency tour shows, *Hansel and Gretel* and *Let's Make an Opera*, were also presented. According to the Ensemble Company Manager:

during the day both companies went out to different schools and did Workshops. These were like the building blocks of opera and they would demonstrate what opera was in a way with duets and ensembles and arias. Children would be asked to determine, for example, "What's the feeling of this aria? It would be like anger or love or murder; all emotions" (Smith, personal communication, March 24, 2003).

The Company Manager explained that there were two groups of Ensemble members and explained that her job was to "arrange the hotel and arrive after driving for 8 hours to Timmins or wherever and book in. The next morning you would be in the schools. I looked after the singers and driving" (Smith, personal communication, March 24, 2003). "The problem of doing two shows a day—you had to make sure

that your scenery had the ability to get up in about half an hour and be taken down in about 15-minutes. So clinically, you were compromising dramatically what you were presenting in the school" (Leberg, personal communication, May 10, 2003).

By November 1980, the Ensemble had presented its first opera for children during a three-week southern Ontario Residency tour with a 1-hour version of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* shown in each community by three Ensemble members with piano accompaniment, full sets, and costumes.

The other Ensemble tour program entitled *Let's make an Opera* was an introductory, participatory opera workshop for elementary school age children. Four Ensemble members and a pianist explored the building blocks of opera and engaged children in creating short musical scenes. Their first presentation for students took place on November 7, 1980 in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Unfortunately, some communities recorded low attendance at the performances, possibly due to poor program marketing. The COC had also been experiencing problems in their efforts to produce materials in enough time to send out to the different communities. Nevertheless, in 1980-1981 teachers were sent an "Introduction to Opera Kit" for their students before the opera arrived at their school. The kit included an opera manners guide, an opera crossword puzzle, opera colouring pictures, and other materials designed to make opera more accessible to student audiences. The *Hansel and Gretel* kit sent to teachers included marketing and promotional material, a teacher's guide with an opera synopsis, composer information, suggestions for set design, technical directions for creating backdrops, and a filmstrip produced by the Metropolitan Opera Guild. The materials were sent out with a letter to teachers saying that the COC would be happy to come to their school and assist in any way possible. The materials were welcomed; teachers had requested more preparation and follow-up material, either for classroom use or for publicity purposes. Prologue was trying to improve its own advance packages by including as much information as possible. Now, with promotional material sent directly by the COC Ensemble Co-ordinator, the hope was that teachers could be satisfied. Thus, pre-opera materials were sent to schools and the touring

communities as part of the Residency Program.

The seven-page teacher resource booklet for *Madama Butterfly* included all the cast member names, a synopsis of the story, a biography of the composer Puccini, general information about the COC and Prologue, a description of Japanese customs, a description of the operatic voice, recommended arias and ensemble pieces to listen to from the production, a bibliography, and discography list (COC Teacher Resource Booklet: *Madama Butterfly*). According to Wronski, “we did lots of things where the kids could be active. We tried to be interactive in our educational process.” The COC thought it would be easier for teachers if they put together a package that “was ready to use with all the information they needed. It was a great way to involve the kids in advance of our tours. Teachers adored having something they could literally copy and put into the hands of the students” (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May 25, 2003).

Although the pre-opera programs were prepared as booklets, the post-opera program was much more informal. The post-opera program consisted of a brief 10-15 minute question-and-answer period between Ensemble members and students after each show. According to the Ensemble Co-ordinator, “I cannot tell you that we did an awful lot of post program work, again, because of resources, time and all the rest” (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May 25, 2003). Following the performances, Prologue encouraged teachers to use the evaluation forms that had been sent. Unfortunately, none of the forms are now available.

According to the COC Ensemble Activities Report on the productions held between December 1980 and May 1981, there had been an initial concern that *Madama Butterfly* would be too serious a performance for students. However, the emotion and melodrama of the opera turned out to be compelling, especially since teachers were somewhat prepared by the advance booklets. The Ensemble Report also congratulated the Ensemble members for their discipline, pacing, and personal determination in rising to the challenges they had encountered (“COC Ensemble Activities Report,” December 1980-May, 1981).

With all Ensemble tours, there were some communication problems with the

schools. The COC made advance calls to the school to confirm the Ensemble's arrival but discovered the school wasn't always prepared when they arrived: "All those details. No matter what you did, on paper as well as advance phone calls, there would always be screw ups. It is the nature of dealing with schools. You are not their top priority" (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May 25, 2003).

During the 1980-1981 season, Prologue did more than book student performances and liaise with the COC. In March 1981, Prologue sent the COC a copy of their new initiative entitled: *A Report: Young Audiences: A National Priority*, which they had also been submitted to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee. Nine headings addressed concerns about arts for children in Canada. They are summarized below:

1. A Canadian Environment invited the Committee to focus on Canadian children and their need to become familiar with Canadian artists.
2. Start with the Children stressed that children should be exposed to a variety of Canadian performing and visual artists who would act as role models.
3. Children Respond to Quality recommended that an organization similar to Prologue should be organized in all provinces across Canada.
4. The Challenge is National was a call for responsibility to transmit a Canadian cultural identity to students.
5. A Partnership Approach encouraged the Canada Council to subsidize struggling resident companies across Canada.
6. A New Status for Young Audiences suggested a shift in Canadian attitude was needed to encourage a change in financial priorities (greater support).
7. Make Room for the Children said that "once the importance of young audiences has been recognized, our major Canadian performing arts companies might be persuaded to devote a little of their time each year to performing for children."

8. The Need to Communicate said that a mechanism to provide opportunities for young audiences to exchange their ideas with the national authorities was needed.

9. The Task Ahead challenged the Review Committee to create a plan of action whereby Prologue would play a role (Prologue, *A Report: Young Audiences: A National Priority*, March, 1981).

No information about the impact of the submission was available in the sources checked.

In 1981, another Prologue to the Performing Arts publicity brochure was sent to the schools in preparation for the 1981-1982 season. It gave a full description of the COC Ensemble and listed seven available performances and workshops. The seven shows compared to the three from the previous year, showed considerable growth (Prologue to the Performing Arts Brochure, 1981).

In conjunction with Prologue, the school touring program, called the Residency Tour, involved the total integration of the opera Ensemble into the community from a few days to one week. The tour programs offered were: *The Barber of Seville*, a 1-hour version for secondary school students; *Little Red Riding Hood*, a 1-hour staged show for a cast of three wearing their costumes; *Opera from A-Z*, a 1-hour show for secondary school students with opera excerpts sung by a quintet of singers using hand props; *Do it Yourself Opera*, a workshop for elementary school children in which a trio of singers explored the different facets of opera; and *Technical Workshop*, in which the technical staff of the Ensemble familiarized students with the stagecraft of opera. *Technical Workshop* also explained and displayed the use of wigs, costumes, sets, props, lighting, make-up technique, and stage management.

The Ensemble Residency Tours made early plans for the 1981-1982 season to present well planned Workshops and mini performances: "Our objective is making opera more accessible to the people of Toronto, the Province of Ontario and thereby developing our audience of the future" ("General Director's Report," October 21, 1982). When booking Ensemble Residency Tours, Wronski

discovered that some of the operas were more popular than others because they were better known: "It was easier to sell a tour to a community of *La Boheme*, than it would be of something else, which is why Lotfi was very aware of the fact that the more popular repertoire was the way to go" (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May 25, 2003).

1981-1982. In its second year, the Ensemble employed nine full time singers for a minimum of 36 to a maximum of 52 weeks. An additional 19 artists were hired with special contracts. Esso was the sponsor for the Ensemble and provided \$150,000 a year to cover the cost of the singers: "Although it was low, their salary was basically covered originally by Esso and later by a Federal Government Agency; it was a Trudeau invention. It was a training program which paid a lot of money to the COC for the training of singers" (Leberg, personal communication, May 10, 2003).

The resident Ensemble singers at this time were Theodore Baerg, Brenda Berge, Christopher Cameron, Shawna Farrell, Cristen Gregory, Eleanor James, Roger Jones, Vytautas Paulionis, and Guillermo Silva-Martin; some of the contracted artists were renowned names such as Carrol Anne Curry, Mark Dubois, Ben Heppner, Mark Pedrotti, Roxolana Roslak, and Janet Stubbs. The full-time musical staff consisted of Derek Bate and Leslie Uyeda. The supplementary musical staff were George Brough, John Greer, Stuart Hamilton, and Wayne Vogan. Lotfi Mansouri and John Leberg were the directors. The technical crew were Patricia Bentley, Rob Bosworth-Morrison, Jan Delovage, Martha Gleeson, Anne Henshaw, Suzanne Maynard, Tom McLean, Jr., Bruce McMullan, and James Thornley.

Once a Residency Tour to a community was booked, a ten-page booklet entitled "Marketing and Publicizing an Opera Residency" was sent out by the Ensemble co-ordinator. A press-kit information package titled "Publicizing a Residency Visit of the COC Ensemble" was also distributed and included local press and public service announcements, quotable opera quotes, a detailed three-page promotion and publicity checklist, and appropriate flyers and posters. The COC marketing and publicity had greatly improved from previous decades.

Since the first Ensemble Residency tour in the Niagara Region in the 1980-1981 season, the Ensemble Co-ordinator decided to visit the cities and towns with the COC publicity director prior to the tours to ensure a smooth visit. The visit confirmed that the packages and booklets that had been sent out to the community and that the radio, TV stations, and local newspapers had been contacted prior to the Ensemble's arrival. The radio and media were very receptive: "Many of them had never really spoken to an opera singer before. They would ask the performers to sing a song" (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May 25, 2003). There was a sharp increase in newspaper publicity, which created public awareness of the Ensemble and the upcoming Residency Tours.

A letter was then sent out to the teachers in the community schools to explain the use of the press kits along with a request for support for the other Residency activities. The letter asked teachers for their help in making the COC visit a success while stressing that as professional teachers, they should be aware of the educational value of having children attend live performances with the added value of discussing their experiences afterwards with cast members. Teachers were asked to use the kits as part of a pre-opera program. The kits included stories, games, and colouring activities. Teachers of secondary students were asked to encourage their students to participate in the community programs available to them as an extension of the Residency visit. A 1981-1982 COC Ensemble promotional brochure also accompanied the teacher's letter and included pictures, the Ensemble's history, the advantages of booking a visit, program availability, and cost and booking information (Letter to teachers from Wronski, 1981).

The Opera Guild in the Georgian Bay Region became actively involved, and several community sponsors and three county school boards shared their enthusiasm. During the two-and-a-half week Ensemble Residency, the Guild ensured that every child from grades 4-6 participated in a Workshop and attended a staged children's opera of *Little Red Riding Hood* ("Residency Project Report," Georgian Bay Region, November, 1981). Another committed community involved in the Residency program was the Peterborough area, sponsored by the

Peterborough Opera Guild. They were primarily interested in a balanced project that would publicly introduce opera to children of all ages in their town. Elementary school children saw *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Barber of Seville*.

During its second season, Ensemble Residencies were a sold out success in every community partially because the communities close to Toronto had already been exposed to the Ensemble through the media. More lead time for planning future visits was possible due to more sponsors. Both the Ensemble and Publicity Co-ordinators made trips to each town prior to the Ensemble visit. The COC realized it had been an oversight the year before to treat the sponsors as if they were professionals and this time, made sure more communication and direction were provided in the 1981-1982 season ("Report on COC Ensemble Activities," July 1981-January 1982).

Since the artists stayed for up to a week in a community, the program became a more rewarding experience for them. The singers felt more rested for performances since they weren't traveling such long distances on a daily basis.

According to Wronski, the Ensemble

achieved its goals. It was the most significant example of a balanced educational-public mixture in a residency visit which penetrated all ages of the community. The incorporation of the school touring schedule with the Ensemble's community residency program resulted in a greater impact on the Georgian Bay Region. Prologue's administrative expertise within the school market, coupled with the financial assistance offered to the school boards (indirectly from the Arts/Education Office) made this project an overwhelming success. ("Residency Project Report," Georgian Bay Region, November, 1981)

A report of events submitted to the Ensemble Co-ordinator following the Southern Ontario Residency Tour October 26 to November 27, 1981, stated that the tour included school visits and programs for adults within the community. Ten singers, two pianists, and five production staff gave the following school performances: a *Junior Workshop* for grades 3-6, *A-Z Workshop* for senior grades, a *Technical Workshop*, and a mini 1-hour version of the *Barber of Seville*. All the programs included the use of wigs, make-up, costumes, and sets ("Company

Manager's Report," 1981).

According to the Ensemble company manager, Muriel Smith, the tour was "a howling success. I was especially moved by the enthusiastic reception given by children and adults to their first opera." She reported that in the city of Brantford there was a touching moment at the Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB) school when the children came up to the performers and were fascinated about touching the performers' interesting costumes with their hands ("Company Manager's Report," 1981).

In addition to the many workshops held in the Oakville schools, performances of *Little Red Riding Hood* and the *Barber of Seville* were given to children who sat patiently on the floor. In Midland, the children were prepared for the Workshops, and the performances went well. In the Georgian Bay Residency, every student from Grey and Bruce County participated in a Workshop and saw a full performance. Owen Sound provided the most difficult performing environment when 875 noisy teens were crowded into an auditorium. In Paisley, there were two children's performances, and in Southampton, a number of Workshops were given as well as one opera held in the school gym for the elementary students. In Kitchener, many workshops had substitute singers like Curry, who were put in the programs to replace some of the singers who had become ill. In total, there were 25 performances of *Junior Workshops*, twelve of *A-Z Workshops*, 15 of *Little Red Riding Hood*, 9 of a mini *Barber of Seville*, and 2 *Technical Workshops* presented on the tour ("Company Manager's Report," 1981). During the performance

one of the things that was very greatly loved was when the Baritone sang Figaro's aria from the *Barber of Seville*. A child would come up, sit on a chair and he would be lathered up as they shaved him. The children would be just screaming. They loved that. (Smith, personal communication, March 24, 2003)

Smith offered recommendations following the 1981 Southern Ontario Residency Tour. She said the students in Grades 1-4 had received the greatest benefit from the *Junior Workshop*, while the *A-Z Workshop* should, in the future be adopted for Grades 5-6 students. She suggested that the children should be

carefully considered when it comes to the choice of the opera being presented:

It would be helpful to the children if introductory remarks were given, creating a framework in which to present the opera, i.e.— the period in which it takes place, disguises as operatic convention with social customs of the times. (“Company Manager’s Report,” 1981)

According to the Ensemble Co-ordinator, the COC had been trying to book Ensemble tours in southwestern Ontario. There were areas that were not as receptive to opera perhaps because they had never had opera come to their school area or for other reasons: “There were a number of educators in the London area that I remember being really tough to crack” (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May 25, 2003). However, there was a breakthrough when Wronski had an opportunity to have a *Madama Butterfly* performance for the Southwestern Regional Teachers Association meeting. Wronski realized the Ensemble finally had a chance to show the educators what they could do so that they would book a show:

We had just got to one of the most beautiful arias when *Madama Butterfly*, our soprano fainted, because she had done up the cummerbund in her costume was just a tad too tight and she hyperventilated. She made the most dramatic fall to the floor, at which point I knew there was a problem. It was just one of those really unfortunate things where we obviously had to suspend the performance and I am not sure if they ever fully accepted our bookings in southwestern Ontario. (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May, 25, 2003)

The Ensemble report submitted for the July 1981 to January 1982 period said: “the success of the residencies is clear: three of this year’s sponsors have already re-engaged the Ensemble for next season!” (“Report on COC Ensemble Activities,” July 1981-January, 1982). The General Director also commended the Ensemble for their artistic achievements during the season: “another sign of sure growth is displayed by our year-round activity, particularly through our Ensemble” (“General Director’s Report,” October 21, 1982).

In January 1982 a letter from the Prologue Music Committee regarding the 1982-1983 season was written to Mansouri. The letter suggested that since the Ensemble tour to Peterborough and Georgian Bay had been so successful, another

one be planned for the 1982-1983 season offering workshops for elementary and secondary school children. *Die Fledermaus* was chosen for the senior grades while *Little Red Riding Hood* was chosen for the junior grades. Prologue offered opera workshops but not tour productions in Metro Toronto that year since senior students were able to attend the dress rehearsals during the regular opera season at the O'Keefe Centre. Junior high students could attend *Amahl and the Night Visitors* at a theatre in Toronto. Prologue also requested the assistance of the COC in improving its public profile. As a result, Prologue and the COC continued to work hand in hand to include as many schools as possible in Ensemble Residency visits (Letter to Mansouri from Prologue, January 15, 1982).

Following the performance there was a 15-minute question period or post-opera program. Some of the questions asked were: "Does it hurt to sing that loud? What is your highest note? What is your lowest note? Why do you do this? How long have you studied? They were always interested. Some schools were better prepared" (Smith, personal communication, March 24, 2003).

While tours and performances were being organized, the publicity continued to grow. For example, five newspapers and radio stations along with two television stations were contacted concerning a tour scheduled from February 8-15, 1982.

Also, a review of *Little Red Riding Hood* was published in the *Toronto Star*:

Theodore Baerg as the Wolf is an agreeable devil indeed, very much the swinging single. And his maniacal laugh is quite in character with the wicked mask of fur. Red Riding Hood and her mother (soprano Cristen Gregory and mezzo Brenda Berge) came across like characters in a detergent commercial, in their spotless germ free house. (Hambleton, *Toronto Star*, May 19, 1982, page unknown)

1982-1983. In the third Ensemble season, 10 singers were employed on a full time basis for a 36-52-week period, and an additional 10 artists were hired with special contracts. It was the first year that a new Resident Training Program was introduced from September 6, 1982 to May 15, 1983. This operatic training program was jointly administered by the COC and the Royal Conservatory of Music. Selected participants were contracted for 36 weeks and during that time

received a high degree of coaching. Upon completion, selected participants were offered a 1-year contract to join the COC Ensemble. ("Summary of the COC Ensemble Activities Report," 1982-1983)

The Ensemble became a talent pool for the COC and other opera companies across Canada and ensured steady employment for a singer. However, since the singers were also engaged in the mainstage productions, it meant that the 2 weeks prior to production time were spent in role preparation and training. This meant less time to tour or present Prologue shows. It was not uncommon for an Ensemble singer to have five roles in the main season and then have many other roles in the touring Residency or Prologue series.

A 1982-1983 promotional Ensemble flyer was sent out to teachers advertising *Little Red Riding Hood*. It included a drawing, brief information, technical requirements, the suggested audience size of 300 to 500 children for Grades Kindergarten to grade 6, a COC contact name with phone number, and a summarizing paragraph which read: "*LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD* is a proven success for children's series, family parties, fundraising events, as well as school-time activities" (Ensemble Promotional Flyer, *Little Red Riding Hood*, 1982).

Another pamphlet was also sent to the schools promoting the Workshop, "What's Opera—Informal Demonstration." The audience capacity was 50 to 150 children and would be presented by a cast of four singers representing each voice category. The pamphlet stated that there were particular technical requirements, including the availability of a tuned piano. A question and answer period about the elements of an operatic vocabulary with audience participation was to follow the program (Ensemble Promotional Pamphlet, 1982).

The Ensemble Co-ordinator sent educators four pages of opera guide materials. These included a student opera quiz and a poetic description of operatic voice types. The material was intended to familiarize students with the characters, story line, and music in order to increase their understanding and enjoyment level of a live opera at their school. Having a pre-opera Workshop for students and supplying pre-opera materials would not have been possible without the generous

sponsorship of the Imperial Oil Company. Donations were also made by the Maclean S. Foundation and a new sponsor, J. Labbatt's Ltd. (Teacher's Guide for *Little Red Riding Hood*, 1982-1983).

At the Prologue Music Committee meeting in October 1982 concerns had been raised about the lack of funding from the Arts Council in the Metro area for the Prologue Ensemble. The Prologue Planning Committee sent out notices in late October to the administrative representative of each company participating in the Prologue program to relay the fact that the arts and education were not immune to the present economic crunch and that Prologue was particularly vulnerable to budget cuts and the prioritizing process. Furthermore, since the 1983-1984 season was being planned, each representative was invited to a "think tank" session on November 18 to discuss the issues, hear feedback, and create some marketing ideas for the future ("Prologue Report of the Music Committee," October, 14, 1982).

In November, Wronski and Leberg met with Prologue administrator, Ms. Terri Kuhl; they discussed the problems with the Toronto school touring program and the lack of funding. The cost of Ensemble touring in Toronto schools would be between \$5,000-\$10,000 per week for the 1983-1984 season. However, the school price for out-of-town touring would be less because the out-of-town school board agreed to pay \$1,100 along with a Prologue subsidy of \$1,350 which would be applied toward the expense of the performances. As a result of the meeting, it was decided that Wronski would submit a brief to Prologue by February 1, 1983 concerning decisions made about the upcoming program. ("Minutes" of Meeting with Prologue Re: 83/84 Season, November 26, 1982).

When the COC Ensemble Southern Ontario tour took place between November 8, 1982 and December 2, 1982, Oshawa, Guelph, Kingston, and Deep River were added to the Ensemble Residency tour. A return visit was made to Brantford and Oakville with a company of twelve singers, two pianists, and five members in the production staff ("COC Press Release," 1982).

When the Prologue Music Committee met again with Wronski and Leberg in

January of 1983, solutions were again discussed regarding the Ensemble's plans for in-school services. Wronski explained that she had been involved in discussions with Prologue and the schools regarding the type of programs that could be offered students. She asked the Committee to examine her proposal for implementation in Metro Toronto and to decide if they would like to become involved with it:

Step one would introduce *Operashops* and *Lecture-Demonstration* programs. *Operashops* had already been successful outside Metro.

The *Lecture-Demonstration* would be a logical introduction to students planning to attend the main stage matinee of *La Boheme*. The COC would commit to funding all pre-production costs and become reasonably flexible regarding touring availability.

Step two would offer the opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors* for a period of 1-week each at two conveniently located school auditoriums and sell a minimum of 500 tickets to students for two performances a day. This idea had been suggested by the Music Co-ordinators from the Metro schools in the spring 1982 so the COC would save a great deal of money instead of showing a mini version of an opera ten times per week at different schools.

Prologue said it would support Step one with the assumption that mutual dates could be agreed upon, and Step two would be deferred until the Christmas 1984. Unfortunately time did not permit the discussion of a step three. Prologue was also concerned that the word "Workshop" used in elementary school promotions might be a turn off for some people, based on information gathered from returned evaluation forms. Yet, Kuhl, Prologue Administrator, felt the Ensemble had prepared a good program for the schools (Prologue "Report of the Music Committee," January 5, 1983).

The Prologue Music Committee accepted the COC's proposal to present *Operashops* in an effort to combat the rising costs of producing the not-so-successful abridged opera productions for students in Metro Toronto. It was decided in January, 1983 that a pilot show would be shown to music educators in order to

generate enthusiasm towards the upcoming 1983-1984 season. Teachers in Metro Toronto were invited in February, 1983 to a complimentary performance of *Operashops*. The invitation read: "It is now more important than ever that we inform and excite young people about opera through educational programs!" (Invitation to Metro teachers from Wronski, February 11, 1983).

A Prologue Music Committee member and school Principal, Mr. Nels Auger, hosted the program for the teachers and an audience of grades 4-6 children. *Operashops* was held at A. S. Taylor School on February 25, 1983; the featured singers were Cristen Gregory, Tania Parrish, Ross Thompson, and Albert Krywolt. The educators were welcomed after the show to exchange ideas and discuss ways in which the COC Ensemble could best serve school educational programs as a partner in future planning.

The company manager reported that the Ensemble did not always tour the same area each year but tried to visit new places in Ontario as much as possible. However, many schools that had seen their shows requested a return visit, which the Ensemble accommodated if their schedule allowed: "We visited the same schools in a number of the same areas a number of times; in Timmins, Peterborough, Kingston, Sault Ste. Marie. We went there during my time at least three times" (Smith, personal communication, March 24, 2003).

In response to the performances, comments on the evaluation forms returned by the teachers were: "Great, Well Done!, and Extremely well done." Twelve of the thirteen teachers who returned the evaluation forms said the advance material was helpful in preparing the students: "Advance material was of particular help to non-musical homeroom teachers who were able to prepare students adequately" (Prologue Teacher Evaluation Forms, 1983).

1983-1984. At the start of the Ensemble's 4th year, 10 full-time singers were hired for a period of 40 to 48 weeks with special contracts for 10 additional artists. The Ensemble's career-development component had been increased from the previous year with a total of 16 weeks now devoted to training. Marlena Malas and Stephen Lord were hired as vocal specialists to monitor the vocal and musical

progress of the singers who were spending at least 6 hours per day, over a 5-day week, rehearsing role assignments and receiving individual coaching. (Report: "Summary of the COC Ensemble Activities," 1983-1984)

In preparation for the season and in response to the returned teacher evaluation forms from the previous season, a new opera guide was once again sent out to teachers who had booked a performance.

The children's reactions to the Prologue performances included:

- "They enjoyed the singing and the drama."
- "The students enjoyed the performance and it gave them some background to what opera is all about."
- "Students enjoyed the overall performance but some confusion and distraction was evident during the longer pieces."
- "Grade one was very bored and it was over their heads."
- "Very receptive and responsive."
- "Students were surprised as they were listening to opera singing and classical music."
- "They enjoyed the performance very much and were anxious to see the evening performance."
- "Most positive at all grade levels."
- "The students were very interested and enthusiastic about opera. They were motivated to see the evening performance of the *Toy Shop*. They have a very positive attitude towards opera after seeing the Workshop."
- "Actors talked to children at their level and the children were attentive—spellbound at times—loved the various voices."
- "My 5/ 6 class were able to quickly recall opera terms after reading the two page poem through once. A good idea for this age."
- "The children did not totally appreciate the trained voices singing in other languages. My class however, remembered 90 % of the material explained to them and enjoyed the Baritone performance best."
- "It was certainly an eye opener for the children. They learned to appreciate

the hard work of a performer and they became aware of the power of the human voice as an instrument.”

- “The students were spellbound.”
- “As we walked back to our school, the students, instead of speaking, sang their conversation.”
- “The pupils were receptive and involved in the performance.” (Prologue Teacher Evaluation Forms, 1983)

Also, the Prologue evaluation form asked teachers’ opinions concerning the relevance of the *Children’s Workshops*. Teachers responded with favourable yet contrasting remarks and suggestions. For example, one school thought the length of the songs was good; another school thought they were too long. In East York, one school thought the costumes and visual aids added to the success of the presentation.

In Etobicoke a teacher’s comments included:

- “Members of the ensemble quickly established good rapport with the audience. The use of pupils from the audience is particularly effective.”
- “The energy and enthusiasm displayed were great.”
- “The workshop was excellent! It’s great to expose the student not only to opera but to Canadian talent as well. Thank you for enriching us.”
- “This presentation would mark the first bit of culture for so many of our students.”

A music itinerant commented that the presentation was educational, as basic concepts were reviewed and expanded upon as well and was also entertaining. Mrs. Mavin said she believed that the performers understood the age group they were singing to and Mrs. Risk, a music teacher, said the performance was an “overall Excellent Experience!” (Prologue Teacher Evaluation Forms, 1983).

Teachers were asked to suggest what they thought future Prologue performances should include. In response, one school said that more graphics would help to keep the students’ attention and also that more audience participation would be better. Two other schools agreed with this suggestion. A principal felt that children

would enjoy fairy tales and some dancing as part of the performance while a music supervisor suggested that there should be more entertainers such as alto, tenor, and baritone singers.

There was a great deal of publicity that year in communities visited. For example, the *Chatham Daily News* reported that the word opera shouldn't scare anybody since the public was already familiar with it from listening to television commercials. The upcoming 3-day Ensemble visit was described as a venue for public and separate school board performances only. The Ensemble would not be performing for the general public in any other way. Parents were also invited to bring their children to see the "beautifully costumed and staged" evening performance of *The Toy Shop*, since it was "the perfect way to introduce your children to musical theatre" (Rickers, 1983b).

A similar article which repeated the information that the Ensemble was planning to spend a 3-day Residency in the city of Chatham to provide school workshops and an evening performance of the *The Toy Shop* was published a week later: "The classic children's story is considered an excellent way to introduce children to musical theatre" (*Chatham Daily News*, 1983, p.11).

After a performance held at Chatham Collegiate, a reporter said the Ensemble introduced the group and told the students they were going to "speak about a subject you're probably not interested in—love and sex." Following the comment, the performers discovered that the students were "both interested and receptive," as they sang a series of "operatic hits about the pursuit and attainment of romance." Mr. Peter Blanchard, one of the Ensemble singers commented on the situation: "We want to spark an interest in the minds of the young people" (Wagner, 1983, p. LF).

The *London Free Press* reported that the elementary and secondary school workshops would be offered and followed by an evening performance of *The Toy Box*, during a three-day visit to Chatham. The Chatham Collegiate Workshop aimed at "demystifying the world of opera and showing the students that it is a form of entertainment anyone can enjoy" since many students had preconceived ideas

that “opera singers were overweight women with high voices” providing an “elitist form of entertainment.” The workshop was based on a love theme which the “ensemble members hoped the teenaged students would relate to and find interesting.” According to company manager Muriel Smith, students “reacted with laughter, applause and seemed attentive and engrossed.” Odette Beaupre, the mezzo-soprano singer, told the students at the end of the performance that “we hope we have planted a seed that will grow into a garden of your love for opera” (Chater, 1983, page unknown).

The *Sarnia Observer* reported that the Sarnia Residency program was going to High Park elementary school to perform the *Do it Yourself Opera* in the morning and then to Northern Collegiate in the afternoon to perform the *Opera A to Z* Workshop (Eagen, 1983).

The *Chatham Daily News* said the performers:

took the entire room, students and teachers alike, on a magical tour through “Opera Land.” The students discovered the difference between recitative and aria; between baritone and tenor; and between contralto and soprano voices. They learned about tempo, dynamics, and emotion—the three important questions an opera singer must ask himself before presenting a song. (Rickers, 1983a, page unknown).

In conclusion, the reporter said the workshops were given “so children and general audiences may discover the beauty of opera” (Rickers, 1983a, page unknown).

The Examiner reported that an abridged version of *The Merry Widow* was to be presented at the Peterborough Collegiate Vocational School auditorium for invited grades 6-8 students in the the county. According to Mr. David Lee, a music consultant for the Peterborough County Board of Education, students had already been listening to excerpts from the opera and were using educational materials designed by the opera company. He also noted that the response from the intermediate schools had been tremendous and that they wouldn’t have any difficulty filling up the 800 available seats for the students (Hicks, 1983, p. 79).

In the *COC News*, a newsletter sent to COC subscribers, a brief paragraph was written about the Ensemble and included information about the children’s

programs in 4 of the 28 lines within the paragraph (*COC News*, Volume 2, No. 1, Spring 1984, p. 2).

In the 1983-1984 season, the Ensemble performed in 10 Southern Ontario and 6 Northern Ontario communities in the Residency program, and in the overall season that year, 13,000 school children saw a performance. The Ensemble visited 55 communities in Ontario. Looking back at those times, the Ensemble company's manager, Smith, recalled that she thought it was fascinating to have seen the young singers who went out on those early days and have "now gone on to huge international careers—Ben Heppner. I clearly remember us starting out at 8:30 a.m. with Ben in the back warming up and getting his voice going" (personal communication, March 24, 2003).

Due to the Ensemble's success and the generous support of corporate sponsors, government agencies, individual donors, and the various communities who had been visited by the Ensemble, the 1984-1985 season would be able to include an apprentice level program for young singers.

According to the *COC NEWS*, the Ensemble's goals had been attained: "The troupe's mandate is to bring opera to Canadian communities that do not have an opera company of their own, to introduce new audiences of all ages to opera through a wide variety of specially tailored programs" (*COC NEWS*, Volume 2, No. 3, Summer, 1984, p. 2).

The company manager remembered the reactions of the children to the Ensemble performances:

I think I really enjoyed to see children turned on for the first time seeing opera. They didn't know what it was, no idea, thought they would hate it. But, I think likely it introduced children to something they could enjoy the rest of their lives just as a listener. (Smith, personal communication, March 24, 2003)

Also, according to Smith, four schools per day would see an opera performed by an Ensemble Residency. About 80% of the touring group's day was spent in schools, and the rest of the time in some evening shows. Some of the schools booked the Ensemble for the whole day so that younger children could see

a performance in the morning, and the older students could be involved in an advanced Workshop in the afternoon. The Ensemble Co-ordinator tried to organize the performances so that no more than 200 students would attend a performance, but at times it turned out to be 300 students. Today many of these singers have sung world-wide and recall those times in the 1980s: “If you survived the school tours you could survive everything.” There had been so much travel and quick adjusting at the time and “I think they acquired skills that would be very useful to them later in life. Singers need to sing, and it was an opportunity every day to get up and sing; sing early in the morning, work all day” (personal communication, March, 24, 2003).

Although the COC had written its own scripts for Workshops in the past, during the summer of 1984, Wronski wrote a script for the upcoming elementary school workshops to demonstrate the different vocal types and their corresponding vocal ranges. The 14-page script called “Favourite Opera Characters” included a list of the singer’s repertoire and a puzzle with clues for the students to figure out as they came to the stage to join the performers at the conclusion of the show. The workshop was written so students would explore five principles of opera and participate without a word-for-word script (Wronski, Script: Favourite Opera Characters, July 1984). Teacher study guides outlining opera definitions and terminology were prepared to complement the new workshop with a list of the singers’ repertoire so that some of the songs could be listened to before the performances.

1984-1985. Going into the fifth season of the Ensemble school performances, seven singers were employed full time for 36-44 weeks with an additional 19 artists hired with special contracts in the Ensemble’s career development program consisting of a 15-week training period. The Residencies took place in central and southwestern Ontario that year, and artists performed for about 20,000 students by the end of the season.

Prologue’s commitment was affirmed in its brochure:

Prologue to the performing Arts is a non-profit organization with an enviable reputation for providing the best performing arts to Ontario schools. Throughout our 18 year history, we have been firmly committed to the enrichment of Ontario's youth by offering stimulating programs in all disciplines. (Prologue to the Performing Arts Brochure, 1984)

The brochure presented two new programs to be offered by the Ensemble. The first, called *A Day at the Opera*, was written for grades 4-6 children to teach young audiences about musical theatre in a participatory opera for 200 students. The second program, called *Operashops*, was offered by the Residency program to schools outside Toronto and prepared young people for either the abridged version of *La Boheme* or *The Toy Shop*, depending on their grade level (Prologue to the Performing Arts Brochure, 1984).

Other programs offered during the season were the Prologue Metro in-school presentations called *O-P-E-R-A*, for grades 1-3 and 4-6 for a price of \$430 per performance; *Metro Career Day* for grades 12-13; *Metro Interns* for student volunteers with a desire to learn the business aspect of opera; an elementary school package which included *OperaDemo* and *The Toy Shop*; and a secondary school package which included *OperaDemo* and an abridged version of *La Boheme*. The free "Opera Study Guides" provided for the teachers were advertised as "chock-full of historical/cultural information, vocabulary lists, and suggestions for project work to prepare your students for the operatic experience" (Prologue to the Performing Arts Brochure, 1984).

In the COC Educational Services' advertising brochure, all the Ensemble programs and booking information for the 1984-1985 season, including the Ensemble members, were listed. The front page of the brochure promoted opera for students and said the Ensemble was committed to bringing the magic of opera to child audiences of all ages. Pictures of previous shows, paragraph testimonials from children of previous shows, promotional descriptions of opera, and booking information were also included in the brochure. The description said: "Opera—enlightening, entertaining, a first class *educational* experience!" (COC

Educational Services Brochure, 1984).

In response to a Prologue evaluation form that suggested that Mr. Dodds, the Director of the East York Board of Education be sent a letter, Kuhl, Prologue administrator, wrote positive comments concerning the attentive, prepared, and enthused students at Secord P.S. "Secord is obviously a well-run institution and a credit to your system" (Letter to Dodds from Kuhl, February 26, 1985).

Also in February 1985, a press release was distributed to inform all readers that the COC was among more than 40 professional North American opera companies that had contributed program ideas to the new publication *Working Ideas: A Resource Guide for Developing Successful Opera Education Programs*, produced in the United States by Opera America. The publication was designed as a resource guide for use by opera companies, educators, and community groups.

In March 1985, a three-page report entitled "Future Directions of the Elementary School Demo" was prepared by Mr. Larry Tayler, the COC Tour Co-ordinator. In the document, Tayler congratulated the Ensemble for introducing opera to thousands of elementary students since 1980 and said that new provincial guidelines regarding gender stereotyping would be impacting on COC educational programs. The report expressed a concern about sexist biases contained in school instructional materials. The Report prompted the COC to examine stereotypes both in the operatic excerpts and their method of presentation. Seven opera excerpts demonstrated historical stereotyping of women as frail, fearful, flighty, unfaithful, and fickle, and only seen for their beauty without character or intelligence. Recommendations were made to initiate change in school opera programs so that they would now be in accordance with the new Ontario Ministry of Education guidelines. The first recommendation concerned the selection of operatic excerpts. The second recommendation asked that experienced school performance singers assist in the excerpts selection. The third recommendation suggested that if excerpts combining musicality and a non-sexist bias couldn't be found, a new elementary school program would need to be developed (COC Report: "Future Directions of the Elementary School Demo").

In the same month, the *COC NEWS* featured an article and a picture entitled “Kids Eat Up Nabisco’s Brand of Entertainment” (*COC NEWS*, March/April 1985, Volume 3, No. 2, p. 2). The article relayed that as part of its “continuing commitment to opera education,” the COC had visited 12 elementary schools in Metro during 6 days in February as part of Prologue for the Performing Arts program. The article said that *OperaDemo* had been a “specially tailored workshop to help a young audience unravel the mysteries of opera. A Nabisco representative who was happy to have been a part of the “imaginative outreach program” said he was “impressed by the quality of the performance and the tremendous response from the students” (*COC NEWS*, March/April 1985, Volume 3, No. 2, p. 2).

Five teacher evaluation forms with student responses were received following the school tours. A Brantford elementary student wrote that she liked guessing the feelings of the singers during the performance and expressed how much she thought the Ensemble singer had a nice voice. A teacher from Windsor said her grade 5 students “enjoyed learning new vocabulary. Children like stories and upon learning that opera is a story were eager to be a part of it.” The Consultant from the Windsor Separate Board of Education said the students reacted “very, very positive” and that students paid close attention to get the “most out of the workshop performance—much to COC credit.” Mrs. Peer, a teacher with the Toronto Board of Education said “the children understood easily what was being said and were quite enthused. The children particularly enjoyed when the singing was directed to a teacher and especially when you included a teacher spontaneously into one of the skits.” A teacher from East York also confirmed that her grade 5 and 6 students really enjoyed the performance at the school (Prologue Teacher Evaluation Forms, 1985).

In July 1985, the Ensemble’s Co-ordinator communicated with educators in preparation for the next season by sending a friendly letter offering her thanks for their support over the years. She also encouraged teachers to book early for the 1985-1986 programs. An educational services advertising brochure was enclosed outlining the programs, fees, and an invitation for teachers to call her at anytime with

questions (Letter to teachers from Wronski, July, 1985). Shortly after the invitation letter to educators had been sent out, the *COC NEWS* had a full-page article which advocated past Ensemble successes but unfortunately didn't include anything about the children's opera programs and Ensemble tours. Only one of the three pictures included in the article was about a performance for students (*COC NEWS*, July/August, Volume 3, No. 4, 1985, p. 6).

1985-1986. The Prologue publicity brochures for the 1985-1986 season were sent out in preparation for the upcoming in-school *Opera Demos*. The new Prologue publicity brochure said the organization had a "commitment to the enrichment of young people—performing arts of the highest caliber to increasing numbers of Ontario schools" (Prologue to the Performing Arts Publicity Brochure, 1985-1986).

The COC Educational Services also sent out a French-language brochure promoting information about the new French language *OperaDemo* performance and guide booklet for students in Ontario French schools. The French *OperaDemo* was advertised for a charge of \$500 per show in Toronto and \$515 per show outside the city. It was thought that the French language *OperaDemo* would serve the community better in an ever increasing French speaking market and fully acknowledge that Canada was a bilingual country. *OperaDemo* was to be presented by three performers who were fluent in both the French and English languages. However, when taking on the project in 1985, the COC realized that they were not just a bilingual opera company but actually a multicultural one, since opera was recognized internationally as a multilinguistic art form.

Taylor, the Ensemble Tour Co-ordinator, sent out 30 secondary school *OperaDemo* guides and 100 elementary school *OperaDemo* guides for Kuhl, Prologue Administrator, to mail out along with the usual school packages for the schools with bookings:

The guides included information about the composer and the background of the opera. They were guides for the teachers, and there were exercises the teacher could give the students; like pages that could be copied and the children could do little exercises. (Smith,

personal communication, March 24, 2003).

For the season, 10 full-time artists were hired for a 36-52 week period, and an additional 22 artists were hired with special contracts. Ensemble performers were offered a 15-week training period for the year and prepared for 10 booked performances of *The Beggar's Opera* to be performed in February and March 1986. At the start of their tour, each member of the Ensemble was given a copy of a detailed schedule clarifying the date and time of each performance, location, directions, details about the school board, and the principal's name and phone numbers (Ensemble Schedule, 1985).

The French *OperaDemo* performances were given in Metro from May 26 to 30, 1986 for a total of nine shows to 1,435 students. The out-of-town Ensemble tour performed 10 *OperaDemo* shows from May 20 to May 26 1986 to 1,300 students. The *Globe and Mail* published a brief article introducing the concept of the the French *OperaDemo* as "educational entertainment for children." The article said that the upcoming Ontario tour was made possible through grants from Prologue and the Ontario Arts Council. Along with the names of each of the performers, it said: "Written by director Steven Thomas, the production concerns a pirate captain who invites the audience on a voyage to discover the treasures of opera, including the art forms involved in singing, acting, ensembles, scenery, props, costumes, orchestra and language" (*Globe and Mail*, May 16, 1986, author and page number unknown).

Ensemble company manager, Ms. Janet Spied reported that the show held at Ecole Jacques Cartier school was performed before "well behaved kids, but very enthusiastic—participated wholeheartedly." She also said that the teachers had the students well prepared for the performance and the "kids were nuts over the props" while the show was "well received" (Ensemble Manager "Report," May 21, 1986).

An evaluation form sent in from St. Jean de Lalonde school said the show was a "very good, informative and amusing performance." The school also thought the French guidebook sent before the performance was helpful and appropriate" (Adam, Prologue Teacher Evaluation Form, June 5, 1986).

When the new French guide was introduced, it was organized in the same manner as the original English opera guides, with special attention to a non-sexist format and sensitivity to role models and stereotypes. The guide was intended to provide easy-to-use student material, assist teachers in their introduction of opera, encourage more students to explore the operatic art form, provide opportunities to explore opera and integrate it into the French school program, and provide a preliminary educational experience for students which would be followed up by an Ensemble visit at another time.

The opera guide emphasized participation on the part of elementary students in grades K-6 and introduced a series of activities to be done on paper at their own pace. The six double-sided pages included an introduction with suggested integrated applications in the curriculum, opera terminology, an opera crossword puzzle, match the words, a general description of opera, and an opera poster. The purpose of the guide was to prompt teachers to use opera as a teaching tool so the guide emphasized learning about key concepts, facts about opera and developing word skills for students who had not been exposed to opera. Unfortunately a copy of the guide or information about the author was unavailable ("French Opera Guide Information Booklet").

The creators of the opera guides all had a teaching background and general knowledge about children's learning styles but were not in the profession as pedagogues. Each one received \$500 in payment for research, writing, and editing with a further payment of \$600 for the translation, consultation, and adaptation of the guide to the French language. The writing and rewriting stage took 2 to 3 weeks over a period of 2 months ("French Opera Guide Information Booklet").

The guides were available free of charge in the province of Ontario; they were not intended as a source of revenue. The Ensemble Co-ordinator asked the Ontario Ministry of Education for \$700 to assist with the costs of adapting the educational opera guide into French language. The COC paid the remaining \$815 ("French Opera Guide Information Booklet").

The marketing plan for the guides was brought about through the

collaboration of Prologue and the COC Ensemble. Prologue was responsible for the distribution of the guides to Ontario schools after an Ensemble program was booked.

1986-1987. The 1986-1987 Prologue to the Performing Arts Publicity Brochure welcomed all its readers to the 20th season of Prologue to the Performing Arts and reported that the 1985-1986 season had been a record year which had involved over 1,650 performances in the various arts, including the COC, for more than a half a million Ontario children. The well organized and easy-to-read brochure acknowledged the generous support of the Ontario Arts Council. The Music section of the brochure described the *OperaDemo* program offered for grades 4-6: "fun as young people learn about opera theatre through participatory demonstrations." The second program, *Opera Residency* also offered *OperaDemo*, in conjunction with its touring schedule (Prologue to the Performing Arts Brochure, 1986-1987).

The Educational Services' advertising pamphlet that was distributed for the 1986-1987 season included a cover page with pictures, a description of the Ensemble's history, excerpts of children's responses, a third page outlining programs offered for the season, a final page with more pictures, and an advertisement about three extra programs for teens and adults. Since four new full time administrative staff had been added to the COC roster, more assistance would hopefully be available for programs (Educational Services' Advertising Pamphlet, 1986).

The French *OperaDemo* for elementary schools was promoted for grades 2-6 with show availability from November to December, 1986. A \$500 fee was charged for the Toronto shows while \$650 was charged for performances outside Toronto. The out-of-town performances reflected a sharp increase in pricing from the previous year.

In September 1986, *COC News* published a sentence promoting *OperaDemo* for the upcoming season: "In the 1986/87 season activities of the Ensemble include in-school *OperaDemos* in both the English and French languages." There was also a paragraph which described the origins and evolution of

the COC Ensemble (*COC News*, Volume 4, No. 3, September 1986, p. 7).

During the seventh year of the Ensemble, 22 performers were employed for a 26- to 52-week period while the Ensemble career development component expanded its time from 15 years previous by 26 weeks of training, depending on the artist. The same coaching staff continued full time ("Ensemble Report of the 1986-87 Season").

Fortunately, the Imperial Oil company continued to support the Ensemble along with an undetermined share of 4 million dollars in grants given by various government agencies. For the first time, the Ensemble also benefited from the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission's program grants which allowed for the provision of an apprentice stage director and an apprentice coach. As a result, the new additions to the company enabled the Ensemble to expand ("Ensemble Report of the 1986-87 Season").

At the start of the season Wronski gave each of the Ensemble artists their scripts and a booklet containing their schedules detailing dates, cities, location, and contact person. Two vans were organized to transport the two groups of artists for each of the programs over the 3-week period. The performers were expected to perform two *OperaDemos* per day for students. The performances were slated to start on November 14, 1986. Mr. Steven Thomas, coach for the elementary school performance, expected the script of *The Adventures of Mozart* to be memorized by October 6 while Mr. Michael Albano, coach for the secondary school performances told the artists "not to worry about memorizing it yet. Changes are still being made, and will be worked out in the rehearsal period" ("Memorandum to Artists Involved in Tour Demo Programs" from Wronski, October 2, 1986).

The artists had also been given a repertoire list which was to be used in the elementary *OperaDemo*. The list consisted of nine vocal selections matched to the performer and the concept they were conveying to the audience. All the songs, including the two selections from the *The Marriage of Figaro*, were performed in English, except for the excerpt from *The Barber of Seville*, sung in Italian and the *Carmen* excerpt, which was performed in French. The topics that were to be taught

to elementary students in *OperaDemo* were: “Drama with music, the Composer, the Orchestra, Emotion Used, Character/Auditions, Language, Recitative/Sets and Props, and Voice Types/Ensemble.” The repertoire list used for the secondary *OperaDemo* also consisted of nine selections, whereby all, except for four selections, were sung in either Italian, French or German (“Memorandum to Artists Involved in Tour Demo Programs” from Wronski, October 2, 1986).

The Ensemble also produced two fully staged and costumed operas for young audiences. The first was a Christmas production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* featuring members of the COC children’s chorus and the second performance, *A Rose is a Rose*, was a 1-hour commissioned work which had 14 student performances during the Spring of 1987. The Ensemble’s Co-ordinator recalled a funny incident when the group had performed *The Merry Widow* on an earlier school tour: “One of the lead males ended up splitting his pants on stage, which of course threw the kids into hilarious laughter and he dashed off the stage to try and figure out what to do with it” (Wronski/Thomas, personal communication, May 25, 2003).

Centerola was also performed for students in English along with the *OperaDemo* program as a feature in the tours to southwestern Ontario and the Ottawa Valley. In total, almost 20,000 students participated in the Ensemble programs both in and out of Metro during the 1986-1987 season (COC Ensemble “1986 Tour Statistics”).

According to the Comparative Statistics of Ontario Tours published by the COC Ensemble administration, there were 25 elementary *OperaDemos* offered each year in the years 1985 and 1986 compared to 13 in 1984. However, the secondary school *OperaDemos* decreased from 11 performances in 1984 to only 6 programs in 1986. (COC Ensemble “1986 Tour Statistics”)

During the 1986-1987 season many of the Prologue student evaluation forms were saved. For example, one student from Ottawa Crescent school in Guelph said she watched a “person who played the piano. I liked it very much. I did not know that opera was everything that was in the show” (Prologue Evaluation

Form, October 30, 1986).

The response of the children at the Lanark County Board of Education show was positive. The responding teacher said that the students really enjoyed the performance and found the concert was "funny" and that students had a "better understanding of music and opera. The performance opened new doors for some of my students." The teacher also thought that 50 minutes was the right length of time for grades 4-6 and that the advance material sent out to the school had been helpful. (Prologue Evaluation Form, October, 27, 1986). Music teacher, Ms. Barbara Muir, also said the advance material sent to the teachers was helpful. Her students responded with enthusiasm, told her that they loved the show and "were highly motivated to learn more." She requested the advance materials be sent sooner "so we have more time to use it" (Prologue Evaluation Form, October 23, 1986).

Another music teacher, Ms. Barbara Code, discovered that her 200 students had changed their initial opinion of opera and she was amazed at how many of them remembered the elements of opera demonstrated at the performance (Prologue Evaluation Form, October, 21, 1986).

The music teacher from Quinte Mohawk school, located in Deseronto, Ontario, said the performance was "certainly appropriate, relevant and entertaining" and was pleased that students had a "chance to sing along." She said, "The age of the performers and their own enthusiastic personalities soon changed the minds of the skeptical older students who had negative mind-sets before the presentation." She summarized: "We need more of this type of promotional material to promote a love and understanding of the arts at this age level" (Prologue Evaluation Form, October 28, 1986). Another music teacher who had 200 of her students attend the performance responded that the children were enthusiastic and very attentive (Prologue Evaluation Form, October 27, 1986).

Teacher Jane Hamel from the Waterloo County Board of Education said that the advance teacher material that had been sent before the performance

gave children a taste of what was to come but still left them wanting more. We at Preuter were very impressed by the presentation.

Audience participation in the development of the "Elements of Opera" was excellent and definitely played a significant part in holding everyone's attention. (Prologue Evaluation Form, October, 21, 1986)

Teacher Nancy Stayzer, also from the Waterloo County Board of Education, responded to the program with a "Yes! Yes! Yes!" She said, "students were eating out of the palms of your hands and that's not easy to do at this grade level! The students' reactions were *all* positive which is extremely unusual!" (Prologue Evaluation Form, 1986). The response from the Music Department at a Lambton Board of Education Secondary School was: "EXCELLENT!!!, VERY INSPIRED, NO SUGGESTIONS, THIS WAS IN EVERY WAY A CLASS ACT" (Prologue Evaluation Form, October 31, 1986). Generally teachers were very pleased with the Prologue programs and indicated that they would have like to receive the advance materials sooner.

Other than Prologue Evaluation forms, various newspapers responded to the performances. For example, the *Ottawa Citizen* published a five-paragraph article about the Ensemble Ontario tour and made reference to the *OperaDemo* programs that were to be performed in the various communities (*Ottawa Citizen*, 1986, page unknown). The *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* published a picture of tenor, Leonard Witing giving a singing lesson to a 9-year old boy from Wilson Avenue Public School in Kitchener. According to the article, "five members of a COC ensemble introduced students to the world of opera with a 45-minute performance" (Koza, 1986, page unknown). The Belleville *Intelligencer* published a picture and a two-paragraph article about the Ensemble's elementary and secondary school visits (*Intelligencer*, 1986, page unknown). The *Niagara Falls Review* published a picture of three Ensemble members and an article about a secondary school performance where performers had demonstrated that opera wasn't "stuffy and boring." According to Mr. Stewart Simpson, art teacher, "We're trying to expose the students to vocal music as an art and get them participating in the performances. Studying opera is just one way to learn that there is more to music and dramatic arts than what's on the television or radio" (Lewis, *Niagara Falls Review*, 1986, page

unknown). The *Toronto Star* published a picture and an article about 10 Ensemble performances given in Metro Toronto schools that were “shattering stereotypes about opera.” It was reported that students were begging to be chosen as volunteers during the shows, and as Sharon Crowther, the soprano in the show said, “If kids won’t go to the opera, the opera will go to the kids. It’s vital to reach kids at this age. Kids grow up with pre-conceived ideas of art forms” (Scrivener, 1986, page unknown).

The Arts Council Newsletter published for the Waterloo County Board of Education included student responses to *OperaDemo* visits. The *OperaDemo* held at Hespeler Public school “was a promotional tour aimed at getting kids turned on to opera, breaking down some of the stereotypes about the music” (Schliessman, 1987, p. 2).

1987-1988. In the eighth year, nineteen artists were employed in the Ensemble for 26-52 weeks during the 1987-1988 season, and a total of 26 weeks was offered for apprentices. Extra funding was made available to Ensemble through the Municipality of Metro Toronto, Cultural Affairs Division, Consumers Gas, and the local Toronto Arts Council (COC “Ensemble Report of the 1987-88 Season”).

The 1987-1988 Prologue shows offered *OperaDemo* for students, performed in either English or French. Both the elementary French or English *OperaDemo* were performed in January 1988, and the secondary *OperaDemo* performances in English were held the last week of October and the first week of November 1987. Both the English and French elementary school *OperaDemo* were presented in a 50-minute program which was fully staged and costumed for grades 4-6, using standard repertoire. The performances were followed by a question-and-answer session, otherwise known as a post-opera program that involved three singers and a pianist who all performed in a participatory presentation. The secondary school program also had three artists and a piano accompanist. The presentation was a 50- to 60-minute program and included popular opera arias and ensemble work.

Following the performance, sometimes teachers would write a report to Wronski: "Sometimes children wrote letters or did art projects related to what they had seen. There would be nice letters from the children" (Smith, personal communication, March 24, 2003).

The 1987-1988 COC Residency tour traveled to many areas across Ontario and established week-long residencies in the communities that sponsored them: Markham, Whitby, Wartburg, Omenee, Bethany, Haileybury, New Liskard, Guelph, Englehart, North Bay, Palmerston, Fergus, Alvinston, Thedford, Sarnia, Dresden, London, Salem, Erin, Azilda, Hanmer, Stratford, Bethany, Lakefield, Baden, Waterloo, and Watford ("Performance Summary Touring Report," 1987/88).

1988-1989. In 1988, the sponsorship of the Municipality of Metro Toronto, Cultural Affairs Division and Consumers Gas enabled the Ensemble to present a new Residency program for the citizens of Metropolitan Toronto. These partnerships witnessed a successful interchange between the arts, education, business, and service organizations (*COC Press Release*, July 11, 1989).

For the 1988-1989 season, Ensemble's Educational Services Brochure sent out to the schools was a two-sided one-page advertising brochure with cartoon figures, a few sentences describing the programs, and three brief quotations of student responses to Ensemble programs. In previous years there had been pictures in the brochure, but this one only had a few cartoons on it. Included with the pamphlet was a letter and a French-language study guide sent out to the teachers who booked a school tour of the *Adventures of Orphee* (COC Educational Services Brochure, August 29, 1988).

Twenty Ensemble artists were hired for 26-52 weeks, with 26 weeks of training offered to the five apprentices with the same coaching staff. The Ensemble performed in the COC's touring production and also completed the 2nd year of the Metro Residency Program in the cities of Etobicoke and Scarborough ("COC Ensemble Report of the 1988/89 Season").

Other performances were held in Hamilton and London, with a total of 18 elementary *OperaDemo* performances and 7 secondary school performances. The

tour groups were funded as each school negotiated separately for the workshop it wanted to sponsor. According to the company manager, Muriel Smith, many out-of-city tours were performed until 1988 and then the Ensemble became smaller: "They couldn't do the amount of program. We didn't have the money anymore to have the big Ensemble. The government cut back a lot in funding and therefore the Ensemble had to become smaller." Since that time, most of the Ensemble's work was in Metro (personal communication, March 24, 2003).

The French study guide continued to be used by students in conjunction with the Ensemble's performance of *Les Aventures D'Orphee*. The guide included an introductory letter, a definitions game, a cross-word puzzle, and a maze related to a list of definitions which students were to discover (COC French Study Guide, *Les Aventures D'Orphee*).

The COC continued to liaise with Prologue in an attempt to introduce a new concept to opera performances in the schools for the 1989-1990 season. In the spring of 1989 Ensemble Tour and Marketing Manager, Ms. Judy Harquail wrote a letter to Prologue Administrator, Kuhl to outline recent discussions concerning the COC's plans for the fall programs of 1989. Harquail explained that future children's programs would be a 45-50 minute show suitable for grades 3-6. The first 15 minutes would be spent explaining operatic terms to the children and would be followed by a 30-minute production of Rossini's *The Barber Of Seville*. A final 10 minutes would be spent quizzing the children about the performance they just saw and allowing them time to ask questions (Letter to Prologue from Harquail, April 7, 1989).

The changes that would occur meant that productions in the 1989-1990 season would be without the customary sets and costumes. Instead, singers would wear sweat pants and sweat shirts with images of the character they were portraying imprinted on their shirt. Judy Harquail said that there would be some hand props which would be kept to a minimum in order to keep costs in line. The show price was \$570. The COC would receive \$510 of the proceeds and Prologue would be given \$60 for the actual contracting of the dates, providing leads, and assisting.

Prologue would also be responsible for providing \$5,000 to the COC for the pre-production costs to assist in the creation of the new program. It was also agreed that the COC would look after booking shows while Prologue would do the actual contracting.

Educational Services continued to promote its programs and liaise with educators. A letter advertising the children's program, *The Barber of Seville*, was sent to Mr. Jim Stone, responsible for the St. Michael's School Choir, Toronto. Stone was invited to call at any time if he had questions about the program (Letter to Stone from Educational Services, May 1, 1989).

The COC continued to liaise with Mr. Michael Jack, a visual arts and performing arts consultant for the Durham Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board, who sent a letter to the COC Ensemble inviting them to showcase its work for the "purpose of acquainting our teachers with the presentations that you are offering for the 1989-1990 year." The showcase was proposed for the 17th and 18th of October, 1989. The COC was asked to reply by the end of June to indicate if the showcase idea seemed a possibility (Letter to COC Educational Services from Jack, June 8, 1989).

A press release published to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Ensemble came in the form of a seven-page report with information about the Ensemble's history. It also relayed the vision that Brian Dickie, the COC General Director, had for the future of Ensemble: "The scope and function of the Ensemble will expand in keeping with the plan for the new ballet Opera House." He said his vision was to have "20 or 30 Ensemble Artists doing 135 performances a year of 12 productions. We hope that the creme de la creme of Canadian opera singers will wish to be members of the COC" (Dickie, *COC Press Release*, July 11, 1989).

The COC press release described the upcoming Metro Residency Program for the 1989-1990 season: "The aim of the Residencies is to create at least one opportunity for people in North York, York and East York, who may not have had a lot of exposure to opera, to see an opera performance in their community during Canadian Opera Company week" (Dickie, *COC Press Release*, July 11, 1989).

1989-1990. In the *COC NEWS*, a half-page article reported that the Residency Program would be performing in Metro from November 6- 26, 1989. Everyone in the community was invited to attend performances in many venues, including special school shows. The advertisement said that the Ensemble would be in North York from November 6-12; York from November 13-19; and East York from November 20-26, 1989 (*COC NEWS*, September, Volume 7, No. 3, 1989).

Another *COC NEWS* article said that a \$300,000 grant had been awarded to the COC Ensemble and that the Employment and Immigration, Canada's Skills Shortage Program had again contributed money for the 1989-1990 season to train resident artists and apprentices (*COC NEWS*, September, Volume 7, No. 3, 1989).

In preparation for the upcoming season, a notice was sent to the schools advertising both the new elementary and secondary school programs available during the Ensemble's Metro Residency from November 6, 1989. *The Barber of Seville* was to be presented for elementary schools in the Toronto and Peterborough areas. It was described as a "fresh approach in creating an entertaining and innovative, as well as educational program." The notice also described the secondary school program as a 45-minute presentation which included opera highlights and musical theatre songs performed by "Canada's most talented opera singers." It was announced that a fee of \$570 was charged per show, and availability was limited (COC Educational Services, September, 1989).

During their 10th anniversary, the Ensemble hired 17 artists for 25-50 weeks; each singer received daily vocal coaching with the members of the music, movement, and language coaching staff. A number of other special trainers also worked with the singers throughout the season.

The Ensemble continued to liaise with the schools as Mr. Nick Kaether, Music Consultant for the Wellington County Board of Education wrote to tell how he organized the *COC OperaDemo* for all the grade-5 Wellington County students. He sent detailed information to all the school principals and outlined which schools

would be attending the performances given twice daily from November 20 to December 1, 1989 (Letter to COC Educational Services from Kaether, November 3, 1989).

Initiatives of the Ensemble Co-ordinator and Opera America

Another contribution towards the growth of opera education began in the early part of the 1980s through the COC's direct association with Opera America's (OA) Education Director, Ms. Marthalie Furber, and the education foundation, Learning about Learning (LAL), in the United States. Overall, these plans showed the first real interest and commitment to opera education. LAL's philosophy was that every child had a unique creative potential and that the programs and materials LAL produced enabled children to develop and apply their potential. LAL had received various grants in order to present training for teachers and to publish written materials for broad distribution, LAL maintained that the investigative and individual creative process, in relationship to current educational and psychological theory, was of importance.

Opera America had sent a memorandum to all American opera companies and, for the first time, to the COC saying it was urgently seeking Kindergarten to high school success stories and photos for an upcoming resource workbook about opera education. The request was for teacher-written preparation materials. Furber was also seeking a Canadian representative so the new resource workbook *Working Ideas* could also apply to the Canadian school system. *Working Ideas* covered the following five areas:

1. the opera company in the world of education
2. perspectives on the learner
3. developing an education program
4. developing education materials
5. organization and structure of an education program. (Letter to COC from Furber, December 20, 1982)

The OA accepted Wronski as the Canadian representative for *Working*

Ideas. A copy of the task force grant application was also sent with a request for Wronski to review the first draft and then at a later date do the final proofreading (Letter to Wronski from Opera America January 10, 1983).

Wronski provided Dr. Cynthia Herbert from the LAL Foundation with suggestions regarding six areas she thought could be improved. In addition she submitted two articles for the new book. The first article was about the COC Children's Opera Chorus, which began in 1968 and the other was about the November 1981 COC Ensemble "Georgian Bay Regional Residency" program (Letter to Herbert from Wronski, April 4th, 1983).

Wronski submitted her general comments describing the Canadian education market and explained that the Regional Boards of Education spent money according to their needs: "In Ontario, it is rare to find individual schools with money and spending control. I am not sure if this is the case across the country." She also relayed that most programming took place in the school itself since the largest opera company in Canada, the COC, didn't even have its own properly equipped opera house with suitable facilities: "Participatory programs, with active audience involvement, are very popular in Canada. Our educators are extremely interested in the accessibility of the arts. Topics of social relevance, dealing with contemporary issues, are very popular." Wronski explained that the maturity level of the Canadian market to opera was at a "grass-roots" level since the "buyers of arts activities in Canadian schools are middle-aged, conservative, and non arts professionals from rural, religious backgrounds and thus the performing arts is not part of their own educational background." She said that only if the COC had visited a city on a one-night basis or residents had listened to a Metropolitan Opera radio broadcast would there be a chance of any exposure to opera for most Canadians. Wronski also talked about the trends in Ontario towards the formation of Schools for the Performing Arts for both elementary and secondary school children and about the formation of Advisory Committees which made recommendations for performing arts companies but did not have financial responsibilities (Letter to Herbert from Wronski, April 4th, 1983).

In June, Furber at Opera America thanked Wronski for her quick review of the manuscript and confirmed that a \$12,500 grant from Artists in Education had been issued for *Working Ideas*. Wronski was invited to a July follow-up symposium in New York (Letter to Wronski from Furber, June 3, 1983). Around the same time in June, Mansouri acquired a seat on the prestigious Opera America Board of Directors representing Opera companies from across America. On November 11, 1983, Furber sent Wronski a copy of their newly developed flow chart, based on the information she had sent them about education funding in Canada (Letter to Wronski from Furber, November 11, 1983).

Over a period of 6 months, frequent correspondence took place between Wronski and Opera America. In June, 1984, Wronski began to create a "Real and Ideal Site Plan" for opera education in Canada. She sent it to Cindy Herbert at LAL-Opera America, stating her hope to see opera integrated into the general education curriculum in Canada. She said only the Grade 12 Ontario Music Guidelines mentioned opera briefly; getting opera into the Ontario curriculum would be difficult:

unless the need was equally expressed from the educators. Therefore the plan is to create a Toronto task force, composed of different representatives from different boroughs (public and separate), and from both music and drama backgrounds. From this group, the proposal will be made to the curriculum writers. (Letter to Herbert from Wronski, June 13, 1984)

Wronski noted that a task force would test "COC educational projects and opera integration further." She mentioned that the COC only performed in schools and didn't integrate opera with the music curriculum at that time. Integration of opera into the curriculum would require "specific materials" (Letter to Herbert from Wronski, June 13, 1984). As a consequence of its affiliation with Opera America, *Kids Invent Opera* program, published by LAL was listed as one of the Opera America Educational Services programs offered across the United States and Canada.

In May 1985, Opera America thanked Wronski for sending her recommended educational materials and acknowledged that they liked her "bilingualism idea" as one that other companies might use. They also told Wronski

that there would be an extension of an American "Arts Alive" series that would be included in an opera and a "PR video" for opera education (Letter to Wronski from Furber, May 10, 1985).

In spite of the correspondence exchange, there was no evidence to show that *Working Ideas* was introduced and implemented in Canadian schools or that it had any great impact on opera education in Canada.

Conclusion

Although an educational mandate for student opera programs still did not exist in the 1980s. There were signs of change: more alliances, more emphasis on evaluation and adapting programs to meet students' needs, and a look at opera education in the United States.

The junior high and secondary school opera productions held in the evening hours at the O'Keefe Centre, Toronto, continued into the 1980s although the details, are sketchy. The COC marketing department organized and publicized the shows, taking over the WOCs' role.

The successful puppet operas presented by the Jr. WOC in the elementary schools in Toronto and surrounding areas thrived at the start of the 1980s but ceased production in February 1981 when the Jr. WOC merged with the WOC.

Prologue to the Performing Arts continued its activities to schedule and promote the COC school programs and liaise with key COC education contacts, Wronski and Leberg. Prologue published an arts report which was sent to each school. It ensured that schools received teacher and student booklets, written in English or French, depending upon the language of performance. Unfortunately, Leberg believed that the materials sat on teacher's desks.

The majority of COC Prologue shows were outside Metro Toronto in smaller cities where they were well received. However, fewer shows were held in Metro Toronto. By the end of the 1980s the format for presentations had changed to more casual style of dress and the new use of portable sets for easier travel from school to school. The COC was co-operative with directives from the Ministry of Education

to ensure programs avoided gender stereotyping.

Financial issues remained prominent. Prologue had little access to government grants for performances in Metro schools.

Since Ensemble Co-ordinator Wronski accepted her position with the COC in 1980, there was a person designated to oversee the Prologue COC shows and support opera education for students. Wronski was also the Canadian representative for the Opera America publication, *Working Ideas*. Unfortunately the ideas that had been formulated by opera educators in the United States were not used by Canadian educators. The lack of interest on the part of the COC, School boards, or Ministry of Education towards creating a plan for the implementation of opera education in the provincial curriculum hindered the growth of opera education in Ontario elementary and secondary schools, especially since the document had been acclaimed in the United States.

The main focus in the 1980s was on the initiatives of the Ensemble; performing for students as part of a Prologue or Educational Services program was one of the many roles of the COC. Upon occasion, the COC Publicity and Marketing department published articles about student opera programs. In *THE COC NEWS*, there were only five short articles about student opera education published in the 1980s. When a major *COC Press Release* was published for the 10th anniversary of the Ensemble, not one word in the Press Release relayed that it was the Ensemble that performed in-school opera performances for eager school audiences.

Although there were other factors which contributed to the growth of opera education in the 1980s, the completion of the new COC building proved to become a valuable resource to opera education as it housed the new *Joan Baille Archives*, which provided information about the COC's programs for children.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of my research was to produce a historical account that examined the Canadian Opera Company's (COC) role in opera education in Ontario schools from the 1950s-1980s. The following research questions were addressed in each of the 4 decades:

1. What was the COC's education mandate since its inception in the 1950s?
2. What was the nature of the COC's education programs and how and why did they evolve over time?
3. What factors helped the COC achieve its educational goals?
4. What factors hindered the COC's education programs?
5. How successful was the COC's education outreach?

I address each of the research questions beginning with an overview of the education mandate and programs. My approach in chapter 4 through 7 was to present the story of the COC's educational programs from its perspective. In this final chapter, I present a more critical view of the story.

Mandate and Programs

What was the COC's education mandate since its inception in the 1950s? What was the nature of the COC's education programs and how and why did they evolve over time?

From the start of the 1950s through to 1990, I found no evidence of a clear opera education mandate. However, each of the participating committees shared similar goals. The primary agenda was to provide opera education for as many elementary, junior high, and secondary grade students as possible in order to generate a future audience of opera goers.

This opera education research examined a number of opera programs initiated throughout the four decades. The first secondary school dress rehearsal

performance held in 1956 at the Royal Alexandra Theatre set the stage for future success. Two expectations had been achieved: Extra funds for the opera company had been generated, and a new group of future opera patrons had been introduced to opera. Although interest had been lacking from the local school board, the leadership of Geiger-Torel and Richard Johnson, assisted by the promotional efforts of the Women's Committee, rejuvenated the program and successfully guided them through the 1960s and 1970s. Performances held at the O'Keefe Centre soon increased to two matinees in the 1960s and then to six by the end of the 1970s for both secondary and junior high students. Responses to the shows from students and teachers were generally positive. Performances were funded in part by discounted student admission and the remainder by the COC. When Lotfi Mansouri became General Director in 1976, the format changed to evening dress rehearsals in 1977 and continued through the 1980s. It is unclear when the Women's Committee completely relinquished its time with the secondary and junior student dress rehearsals, but it is certain that by the start of the 1980s the Marketing Department had taken on the task. Few details of the programs were discovered in this research through the 1980s.

Opera performances for younger elementary students began in the early 1960s at the O'Keefe Centre when the Jr. Women's Committee organizers saw a way to introduce their own young children to opera. After a couple of years when the sold out shows were canceled due to high production costs, shows increased in number when relocated to the smaller venue at the MacMillan Theatre, University of Toronto, and used opera students as performers. Adaptation to changing circumstances proved beneficial. By 1969, the Jr. WOC experienced difficulty generating revenue since an orchestra became mandatory, yet performances continued into the 1970s. The last documented evidence of their existence was in 1973 following the commissioning of the first children's opera. The elementary children's operas were very popular and well attended due to the enthusiastic efforts and leadership of the Jr. Women's Committee.

The Jr. Women's Committee also volunteered to introduce young

elementary children to puppet opera in Toronto area schools starting in 1970. Thousands of young children saw the free shows in their schools and responded favourably until the last show in the early 1980s, when the Jr. Women's Committee amalgamated with the Women's Committee.

The Prologue to the Performing Arts program was initiated in 1966 through the endeavors of both the Women's Committee and the initiative of a Music Educators Conference held prior to the formation of Prologue. The Conference attendees called for the collaboration of the COC, other arts groups, music teachers, music supervisors, and government officials to find solutions to faltering music programs in the schools. The Honourable Bill Davis, announced his support for the arts in Ontario. As one solution, each participant recognized the necessity of introducing students to the arts initially in junior high school. The non-profit organization, Prologue, became the booking agent and liaised with the COC to ensure quality programming. In the 1960s there were up to 153 performances in a year with two per day. In the 1970s there were half as many performances in a season due to funding. When the number of grants declined in the 1970s, it was up to the schools and the school boards to fund the performances. The programs presented included a post-opera question-and-answer period with the performers and a performance evaluation form for teachers. In the 1980s pre-opera study guides in English or French and an opera cassette tape were provided for teachers and students. Performances were popular out of Toronto and especially after the introduction of the COC Ensemble Residency tours. Due to the Ensemble's out-of-town popularity, fewer performances with the Ensemble as part of Prologue were held in Toronto in the 1980s.

The out-of-town COC Opera Guilds provided the assistance needed for the Prologue to the Performing Arts shows to continue in communities outside Toronto and also assisted with the elementary children's puppet opera productions in their area.

In the 1980s, a new relationship between the COC and the neighbouring United States opera companies was nurtured by the COC Ensemble co-ordinator

who participated in a new opera education curriculum organized by Opera America called *Working Ideas*.

Basically the COC had no educational mandate beyond Committee-determined goals which mainly addressed wide exposure to opera. Volunteers, external pressures, and inspired leadership in the COC and some school districts were largely responsible for program changes related to the schools.

Helpful Factors

What factors helped the COC achieve its educational goals?

Many factors helped the COC achieve its educational goals of introducing opera to students of all ages and creating a future audience. There was a strong sense of direction and communication during the years when Geiger-Torel provided the leadership and won the support of the local school boards. Mansouri changed directions with the introduction of the Ensemble but still exercised strong leadership. Both the Women's and the Jr. Women's Committee volunteers provided the necessary effort and desire to foster opera performances for students. The affiliated Opera Guilds continued to provide the necessary leadership to keep the programs, especially Prologue, alive.

Positive responses and reports supported each of the programs initiated over the 4 decades. Numerous letters sent to the COC, along with positive comments on the Prologue evaluation forms, provided the feedback that helped the COC acknowledge its educational goals were being achieved.

Fortunately government grants from the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council helped sustain the Prologue to the Performing Arts programs. The COC Ensemble was also generously provided with grants and corporate funding. Affordable discounted ticket prices for the junior and secondary students attending the matinee and evening dress rehearsals also maintained student attendance on an annual basis.

The publicity of the Prologue brochures and the numerous published news articles about the Ensembles' involvement in the Prologue children's programs were another factor in helping the COC reach its educational goals at the time.

The introduction in 1980s of pre-opera resource materials for teachers and booklets in French or English for students helped raise the interest level in opera for children. The post-opera question-and-answer periods were also popular and sustained the interest of the children. The COC's ability to adopt to challenges and changing times also contributed to the longevity of its educational initiatives.

Thus, a number of factors, including adapting to the times and an optimistic view of progress helped the COC achieve its educational goal of providing opera experiences to a large number of Ontario students.

Hindrances

What factors hindered the COC's education programs?

There were hindrances to the programs throughout the decades. In the 1960s some student performances at the O'Keefe Centre reported behavioural problems during the matinees as the students had difficulty understanding the words in a foreign language and, in spite of promotional material, had little preparation or introduction to opera before their attendance at the show. Also, the local matinee performances held at 3:30 p.m. in the earlier years due to the insistence of the school boards, caused both a financial burden and organizational problems which resulted in little lead time to re-organize the stage between late afternoon and evening shows.

In the 1960s, one of the biggest problems was the time it took for correspondence between the COC and the school boards. Often there was a 6-to 8-month period of letter writing before ticket orders were finalized.

Besides the financial issue with the secondary and junior high performances, there was a shortage of corporate, private, and government funding in the form of grants to sustain relatively expensive programs. Prologue programs, which had been presented in at least 153 schools in the 1960s, had to be reduced in the 1970s and 1980s for financial reasons. The elementary performances at the MacMillan Theatre were phased out in the early part of the 1970s after a financial crunch generated by the requirement of a professional orchestra for their performances.

The successful puppet operas in the 1970s and at the start of the 1980s had not met with financial problems but faced a loss of volunteers as women entered the workforce. As well, the productions ran into school board policy involving the use of non-professional performers in the schools.

Although the COC had connected with Opera America and had access to opera curriculum, teachers did not receive opera education in preservice or inservice programs. Although considerable effort went into designing educational materials, especially in the 1980s, there is no evidence of wide usage or lasting impact of the materials. Nor was opera formerly acknowledged and integrated into the Ontario Curriculum.

During his interview, Mr. John Leberg, often asked if the shows presented to students were really a part of opera education, or just an opera performance enjoyed in a passive manner by students. Regrettably, he believed that only the Ensemble program had been a real success and that the other programs for students had failed as the government in power from the 1960s did not take music education seriously. As a result he believed that students in Ontario had gone without a quality music education program since then (personal communication, May 10, 2003).

The factors working against opera education continued to challenge the COC over the 4-decade period of this study. No long-lasting solutions for opera education were discovered or became part of the COC's internal structure.

Level of Success

How successful was the COC's education outreach?

Did success to the COC mean numbers of students who participated in the programs and therefore could be expected to be part of a future audience? Judging by the favourable response letters from teachers combined with the positive reports from the Women's Committees, the General Directors, Prologue, and the Ensemble, the answer is "Yes."

The Jr. Women's Committee succeeded with the introduction of children to puppet operas held in the Toronto area schools. Thousands of young children had

seen the free-of-charge shows and responded favourably from its inception in the 1970s to its conclusion in the early 1980s. The elementary children's performances at the MacMillan Theatre were highly successful until 1973, after which no documentation concerning the programs was found.

The Music Conference in the 1960s was also successful in bringing the arts groups together, which helped in the future organization of Prologue to the Performing Arts. Prologue was successful as it continued to book shows for the COC from its inception to the end of this study in the 1980s.

The Ensemble had been a highly rated success and was able to promote promising professional artists among the children who saw their performances and had established a relationship with the artists through the post-opera question-and-answer period following the show. The COC was successful in promoting its role as a high quality, professional organization involved in the development of young singers and interested in promoting more performance opportunities for their employees.

Education, however, is much more than exposure. If success for educational outreach is understood to refer to something more than exposure, there is little evidence of success in the story recorded here. There is little evidence to indicate that deeper music learning was happening.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although this research was based on as much data as could be accumulated within the established time frame and financial restrictions, some aspects of this study are incomplete or inconclusive. Future research is needed in the following areas:

1. examining opera education in Ontario from 1990 to the present,
2. interviewing more individuals involved in opera education for their stories to confirm or contest the data in this thesis,
3. interviewing school-based personnel for their recollections about opera education in their schools,
4. examining trends in audience growth to determine the validity of claims for

opera education as a generator of future audiences.

5. determining where Ontario opera education programs fit in the Canadian story

To obtain a broader overview of the educational programs since the 1950s, it would be logical to gather information from the 1990s to the present. The growth patterns of the programs, along with any specific factors that may have hindered progress should be examined. By the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s, a transitional period was underway; full time educational co-ordinator was hired in the 1990s, and new programs for students were added. A more comprehensive picture would be gained by examining the 1990s and programs in the 21st century.

Interviewing individuals representing some of the programs examined in this thesis could provide further insight into the events from 1950-1990. Such individuals could have interesting stories that could enrich the historical account of the COC's educational programs. Although the reactions of students and teachers to the Prologue COC in-school programs has been reported, a different perspective could arise if teachers and consultants who had been involved were also interviewed.

Finally, adults who had seen any of the COC in-school or out-of school COC operas as students could be interviewed to find out if they were currently or had recently attended opera presentations. Did their early exposure to opera presentations influence their attendance patterns? What did they learn?

Recommendations to the COC

Holt (1985) suggested five components to opera education: (1) in-class arts and opera activities, (2) participation in the arts, (3) arts literacy or aesthetics, (4) student productions, (5) and student attendance. Between 1950 and 1990 the COC clearly addressed student attendance and in-class opera activities (whether or not teachers cooperated). In the later decades, it also attempted to foster minimal student participation in opera productions. It could be argued that arts literacy was touched upon between the schools and the COC—but only superficially by way of facts rather than a deeper study of music. Student productions of operas did not

occur as part of the COC's educational outreach.

As opera education was delivered in Ontario from 1950-1990, with exposure and learning *about* opera the key features, its value to music education could be questioned. As mentioned previously, Leberg also questioned the role of education in opera. If opera education were the only music education to occur, then the music program would indeed be limited. If, however, opera formed one component of a more comprehensive program, then the exposure to opera could enrich students' artistic experience.

One further comment needs to be made. The expertise of the teacher makes a significant difference in the music learning outcomes for students. While classroom teachers may have a role to play in relating opera to other subjects in the curriculum and can help students learn *about* opera, it is music specialists who can foster deeper musical understanding with opera as the medium. In Ontario elementary schools, too often, there were no music specialists.

One recommendation to the COC would be for them to keep a complete record of program evaluations for more systematic program appraisal and improvement. Another would be to be certain that complete bibliographical information is provided with archived items. Offering to provide workshops in opera education by a certified teacher familiar with the Ontario Curriculum and understanding to the needs of Ontario teachers, would be most beneficial to educators. The COC teacher would become the liaison-resource between the schools and the COC. They would be responsible for sourcing and providing up-to-date materials, such as books and recordings for teachers, as well as providing assistance to classroom teachers of opera education. Continuing and consistent forms of communication, such as newsletters, e-mail and COC promotional material, would keep educators informed and assist the development of a greater interest, understanding, and motivational force to foster opera education programs in their schools. It is also recommended that a committee of elementary teachers be organized in order to support the COC with its endeavours. A Foundation to foster opera education in Ontario schools could also be established.

Coda

Although those interested in promoting opera education in Ontario schools adapted to the times, their enthusiasm and passion for opera did not translate into an acceptance of opera in the Ontario curriculum, nor in solid music education learning outcomes. They did, however, provide exposure to opera to many children who would otherwise have had little opportunity to experience this art form. At least in the four decades researched, every new year brought its challenges—financial, contractual, social, and educational—and there was too often a question about whether student performances could continue. The work continues.

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Appendix A
Human Research Ethics Committee
Certificate Of Approval

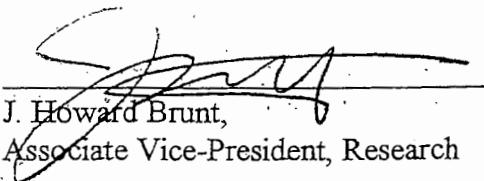
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA - HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

<u>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</u> Donnalee Smith Graduate Student	<u>DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL</u> EDCD	<u>SUPERVISOR</u> Dr. Betty Hanley	
<u>CO-INVESTIGATOR(S)</u> :			
<u>TITLE</u> : Opera Education: Canadian Opera Company (1960-2000)			
<u>PROJECT No.</u> 421-01	<u>START DATE</u> 7/26/2002	<u>END DATE</u> 7/25/2003	<u>APPROVAL</u> 7/26/2002

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the University of Victoria Ethics Review Committee on Research and Other Activities Involving Human Subjects has examined the research proposal and concludes that, in all respects, the proposed research meets appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Subjects.


 J. Howard Brunt,
 Associate Vice-President, Research

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the procedures. Extensions/minor amendments may be granted upon receipt of "Request for Continuing Review or Amendment of an Approved Project" form.

OFFICE OF VICE PRESIDENT RESEARCH
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Appendix B

Recruitment Letter

Donnalee Smith,
51 Datchet Rd.,
Toronto, Ontario
M3M 1X4
[Date]

Dear [],

My name is Donnalee Smith and I am a graduate student attending the University of Victoria in British Columbia. I have also been an opera lover since my early teens when I attended my first COC opera in Toronto. A research thesis is part of the requirements for a M.A. degree in the department of Curriculum and Instruction. You are being invited to participate in this research. You will be able to contact me by telephone at any time regarding this research at (416) 249-7400 and also my supervisor Dr. Betty Hanley by telephone at (250) 721-7835 or at the following e-mail address: bhanley@uvic.ca . You may verify the ethical approval of this study or raise any concerns you might have, by calling the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria at (250) 472-4632.

The purpose of my research is to produce a historical account that examines the Canadian Opera Company's (COC) role in opera education in Ontario schools from 1960-2000. In view of the COC's connection with opera education, a history that traces the COC's contributions to opera education in the schools would be helpful to the COC and other Canadian Opera Companies in setting future educational directions.

As a [role], you have valuable information concerning past [present] COC

educational programs. Existing documents are incomplete, so it is necessary to include oral history. I invite you to participate in a study entitled *Educational Programs: Canadian Opera Company (1950-1990)*. Your contribution would be to participate in an interview addressing five major research questions:

1. What has been the COC's educational mandate since its inception in the 1960s?
2. What has been the nature of the COC's educational programs and how and why did they evolve over time?
3. What factors have helped the COC achieve its educational goals?
4. What factors have hindered the COC's educational programs?
5. How successful has the COC's educational outreach been?

If you agree to participate in this research, we will set up an interview that would take between sixty and ninety minutes. You may choose not to answer any given question asked in the interview. The interview will be recorded on audio tape and will be transcribed at a later date. A copy of the transcription will be sent to you to read over a two week period and then be returned to me. The information you provide will then be used in my thesis, in a presentation, and possibly a published article. Information provided by you that is used in my thesis will be sent to you for your approval and will not be used without your consent. Consequently your information will not be anonymous or confidential. All historical documents will be given to the Canadian Opera Company for their archives. Interview data will be stored in a locked cabinet for one year and then destroyed. You may voluntarily provide information in the interview and at a later date choose to withdraw your permission to include any information once you have read the transcript of the interview and the information that will be used in the thesis.

The interview time and location will be arranged at your convenience. There are no known or anticipated risks to you for participating in this research. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you withdraw from the study your data will not be used in my research. Also, please note that I am a music teacher with no authority or decision making regarding COC educational programs in

the schools. I am interested in furthering the cause of opera education in Canadian schools.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include the awareness and knowledge that you are making a valuable contribution to a historical development that has not been previously documented.

Your signature below will indicate that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers. Thank you again for your interest and cooperation. I look forward to your reply so that we may set up an interview time together at your convenience. Please contact me if you have questions concerning this research and interview process and please respond to my request by returning the signed consent to me at D. Smith, 51 Datchet Rd., Toronto, Ontario, M3M-1X4.

Sincerely,

Donnalee Smith

Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

I agree to being interviewed by Donnalee Smith as part of her research about educational programs developed by the COC from 1950-1990 and may choose not to answer any given question asked in the interview. I understand that the interview will be recorded on audio tape and will be transcribed at a later date. I understand that the information I provide will be attributed to me and that I will be able to check the accuracy of the information before it is used. I also know that I can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. Please return this consent by _____.

Name of participant

Signature

Date