

Bringing Opera to a Small Community

by

Amy Louise Yekel

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Jerry Doan, Chair
Anne Kopta
Rodney Rogers
Robert Mills
Dale Dreyfoos

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research project is to provide participants with a personal experience in opera, to change their perceptions and provoke further interest in the art form. By introducing community opera into a society, we can educate and perhaps expand the acceptance of opera in a population. This document uses The Survey of Public Participation of the Arts by the National Endowment for the Arts in order to provide an accurate account of the declining attendance of opera. Only through education and exposure can we improve opera attendance. In order to create opera appreciation the researcher introduced an applicable opera performance situation in a small community. The process in which the opera was implemented has been evaluated and separated into the following eight components: preparation, rehearsal, set construction and props, pamphlets, budget, advertising, dress rehearsal, and performance. Each will be considered separately. The benefits of that community program and the process in which the opera took place are included in this research.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my mother, who above all taught me to never give up. She always believed in me. Without her love, support, and encouragement I would never have finished.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the aid of many people. First, I give my undying love and gratitude to my husband, Chuck Miller, whose support and participation was crucial to this project. A special thanks to Shreve United Methodist Church, and the many wonderful choral members that participated and made this project successful and enjoyable. A debt of gratitude is owed to Dr. Daniel Clark who edited this paper, and I would like to express my sincere appreciation to each member of my committee; your wisdom and guidance has been invaluable. Finally, I will never be able to completely express how grateful I am to have such wonderful and supportive family members.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research project is to provide participants with a personal experience in opera, to change their perceptions and provoke further interest in the art form. By introducing community opera into a society, we can educate and perhaps expand the acceptance of opera in a population. By following the steps outlined in this paper, similar events in other communities may lead to a general revitalization of interest in opera as a more popular form of entertainment and education. This paper reviews the production of one such event in the small community of Shreve, Ohio.

The village of Shreve is located in Clinton Township, in Wayne county Ohio, USA. According the Census Bureau of 2010 the population of Shreve village was 1,582¹. This small farming community has a total area of 0.9 miles and 699 housing units. According to the Shreve Business website² there are no community theaters or opera houses in the area.

In rural America where opera is less accessible, the general public may perceive opera as outdated and have difficulty relating to the material. This perception can result from the historical time frame in which an opera may be set or the subject matter the composer is attempting to portray. Although operas deal with a wide variety of subjects based on period attitudes, earlier musical styles, and obscure historical events, many of the basic dramatic themes found in opera are still on-going today. Populations unfamiliar with opera may be surprised to

¹ Charles Louis Kincannon "Census Bureau" www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/phc-2-37-pt2.pdf

² <http://www.shreveohio.com/business.htm> is a website

find that adaptations of operatic subjects are often found in popular culture. An ongoing trend by opera companies to reach a broader audience is to update the periods in which operas are set to a more contemporary time period. Adaptations of opera subjects are consistently woven into present day entertainment and companies produce operas with modern settings. Opera is still relevant today and can be a viable medium through which emotional connection to an audience can be achieved.

*The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*³ published by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2009, under the direction of Sunil Iyengar, shows a decline in attendance and participation in arts events. The greatest decline occurred in opera, having potential negative repercussions affecting opera's future. A lack of exposure to opera, in the general population, could be a potential reason for the decrease in opera attendance. Exposure to opera could inspire greater appreciation and facilitate an increase in attendance at operatic events.

The researcher chose a smaller community in order to test the hypothesis that the local production of a short opera on a limited scale could lead to greater participation and interest in the art form in general. The selection of the opera was based upon conditions of the performance situation, which encompassed not only financial restrictions, but also casting limitations. Since the community opera was held at Shreve United Methodist Church, a religious institution, the opera had to meet specific criteria in order to be approved. Due to its charming

³ Sunil Iyengar, *The Survey of Public Participation of the Arts* (Washington, DC: The National Endowment for the Arts, 2008)

story, tuneful melodies, and easy accessibility for both audiences and performers, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* was selected for this research project. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is one of the most frequently performed contemporary American operas.

The process in which the opera was implemented has been evaluated and separated into the following eight components: preparation, rehearsal, set construction and props, pamphlets, budget, advertising, dress rehearsal, and performance. Each will be considered separately.

Producing community opera in a rural setting could help alleviate the possible problems caused by the declining attendance at opera productions. Bringing opera to a small community gives people the opportunity to increase their awareness and involvement, and provides the potential for further participation.

Delimitations

The research collected in this study is used to form a basic introductory program for bringing opera to a small community. This study does not include a detailed journal, a step by step description of the production, or a theoretical analysis of the opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. The intention is to provide a general description of the process.

Review of Related Literature

The following review of related literature is divided into four sections. The first section consists of biographical literature on Gian Carlo Menotti and his works. The second section includes sources relating to community-based theater.

The third section includes references for beginning and managing a theater. The fourth section consists of guides for teaching and planning. The chapter ends with a concise synopsis of related literature.

Biographical Literature

Menotti can be found in almost any dictionary or encyclopedia of musicians, reflecting the admiration by the public of his many works. The *New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*⁴ includes a small article on Menotti. The *International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians*⁵ features an in-depth chronological study of both Menotti and his operas. Information about Menotti's importance to the operatic field is written about extensively in this resource. Many of Menotti's contributions to opera are recorded, such as his Festival of Two Worlds at Spoleto Italy founded in 1958. The formation of a Spoleto Festival in Australia and Spoleto USA in Charleston, South Carolina were also created by Menotti.

Other Contributions to the field of opera include *The Old Maid and the Thief* commissioned by the National Broadcasting Company specifically for radio and *Amahl and the Night Visitors* written expressly for television. Menotti took opera from the stage and put it in the homes of the population. *The Opera Companion to Twentieth Century Opera*⁶ and *Opera: The Rough Guide*⁷ give

⁴Stanley Sadie, The New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1980)

⁵Thompson, Oscar, ed, The International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians. (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1985)

⁶Martin, George. The Opera Companion to Twentieth Century Opera. (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1979)

synopsizes of Menotti's operas. Along with this synopsis is a list of Menotti's most important operatic works: *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *The Medium*, *The Consul*, *The Saint of Bleeker Street*, *The Telephone*, *Amelia goes to the Ball*, and *The Old Maid and the Thief*.

*Gian Carlo Menotti on Screen: Opera, Dance and Choral Works on Film, Television, and Video*⁸ includes a vast quantity of useful information on Menotti and all of his works. The author, Ken Wlaschin, not only gives a detailed synopsis of the operas by Menotti, but also describes the contribution and outcome it had on cinema. Wlaschin describes Menotti's vision and efforts in staging his first operas on film.

Sources Relating to Community-Based Theater

There are a limited number of books devoted to community-based theater projects. Unfortunately, these books view community-based theater in a very confined and limited way. For example Glenn Ehestine's book *Theater, Culture, and Community in Reformation Bern, 1523-1555*⁹, Kuflinec's book *Staging America : Cornerstone and Community-based Theater*¹⁰, and *Community*

⁷ Matthew Boyden, *Opera: The Rough Guide* (London: The Rough Guides, 1997)

⁸ Ken Wlaschin, *Gian Carlo Menotti on Screen: Opera, Dance and Choral Works on Film, Television, and Video* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1999)

⁹ Glenn Ehrstine, *Theater, Culture, and Community in Reformation Bern, 1523-1555* (The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2001)

¹⁰ Sonja Kuflinec, *Staging America : Cornerstone and Community-based Theater*. (Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003)

*Theatre: Global Perspectives*¹¹ by Eugene Van Erven, all base their theories on viewing and engaging community-based theater on circumstances applicable to specific communities. These books have valuable historical content of how community-based theater evolved, but contained little or no significance to this study.

A noteworthy book entitled *Local Acts: Community-based Performance in the United States*¹² provides awareness to community-based theater as a medium for the arts. This book explores community-based theater's purpose in a community and refers to several examples of successful programs built in the United States.

*Music! Words! Opera!*¹³ is a textbook series providing music teachers with ways of incorporating opera into the classroom. Each series consists of fifty-one lessons and a final project to create an opera. This series no longer comes in a complete package, since the CD for the third book is not available. Although it is an excellent resource for a grade school program, the researcher found it minimally helpful for this project.

Orientation: Beginning and Managing a Theater

A significant publication on how to begin and manage a theater can be

¹¹ Eugene Van Erven, Community Theatre: Global Perspectives (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2001)

¹² Jan Cohen-Cruz, Local Acts: Community-based Performance in the United States. (Piscataway, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005)

¹³ Clifford Brooks, Music! Words! Opera! (Saint Louis, Missouri: MMB Music, Inc., 1991)

found in *How to Start Your Own Theater Company*¹⁴ by Reginald Nelson. *How to Start Your Own Theater Company* contains all necessary information from choosing a location to installing educational programs. This source has detailed information on publicity, finances, how to hire, job descriptions, marketing, and fundraising. *Theatre Planning*¹⁵ by Roderick Ham describes the actual schematics of building a theater. This reference gave some clarity on how to adapt and use a stage for specific purposes.

Guides for Teaching and Planning

There are numerous manuscripts dedicated to the preparation and staging of plays, musicals, and opera productions. *Problems of Opera Production*¹⁶ by Walther Volbach contains useful information in this study. Volbach's book provides information on anticipating potential complications in opera productions. The first part of the book includes the intricacies of the music and synchronization of all the elements, such as instrumentation, tempo, making musical cuts, and how to correlate music and action. The second section of the book refers to specific groups such as dancers, chorus, designers, directors and workable solutions to practical problems. The third and final segment of the book focuses on how to run auditions, select operas, make rehearsal schedules, accomplish coordinated dress rehearsals, and execute a final performance. Volbach comments on a wide

¹⁴ Reginald Nelson, *How to Start Your Own Theater Company* (Chicago, Illinois: Chicago Review Press, 2010)

¹⁵ Roderick Ham, *Theatre Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972)

¹⁶ Volbach, Walther R. *Problems of Opera Production* (Hamden Conn: Archon Books, 1967)

range of responsibilities in detail and recommends resolutions for assorted problems that occur during rehearsals and performances.

Summary

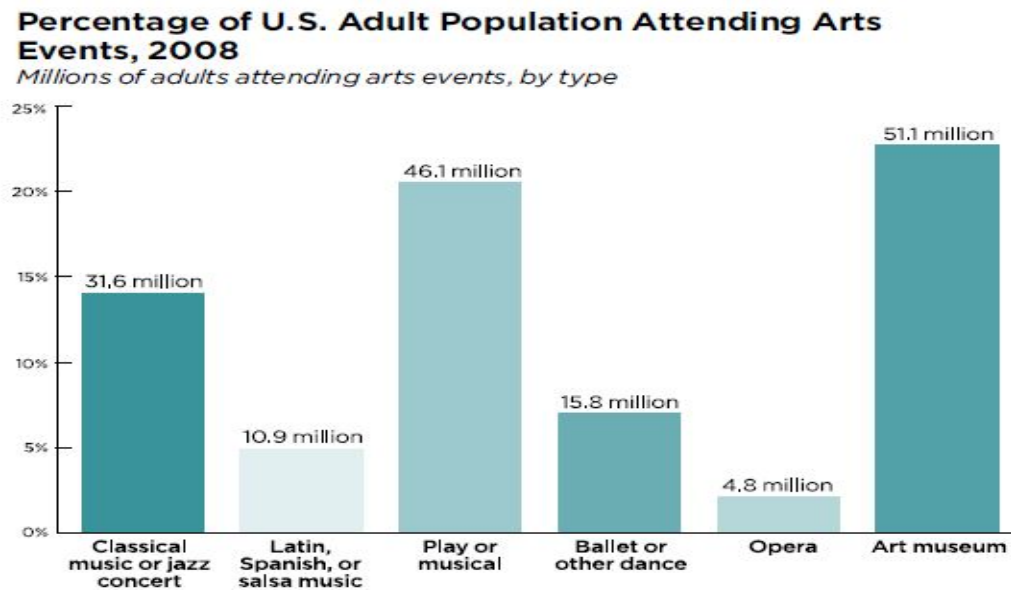
Written material for bringing opera to a small community is limited. While there are several publications related to the disposition of community theater and building a company, research on opera's role in the community and its effectiveness is inadequate. After searching and reading numerous sources, the researcher found the material was not specific to what this study is trying to accomplish. The limited result provides support for original research on this topic. The shortage of information about opera and its effect in small communities denote the need for further research.

CHAPTER 2

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT OF THE ARTS SURVEY

The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA), led by Sunil Iyengar, the Director of Research and Analysis for the National Endowment for the Arts, was published by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2009 and presents a statistical report of adult participation in the arts with a long term analysis of the trends shown by this data collected over a twenty-six year period. “Researchers at the National Endowment for the Arts developed the SPPA with a team of statisticians, sociologists, economists, and representatives from various art disciplines, and it has been conducted five times in partnership with the Census Bureau: 1982, 1985, 1992, 2002, and 2008.”¹⁷

Figure 1¹⁸



¹⁷ Sunil Iyengar, *The Survey of Public Participation of the Arts* (Washington, DC: The National Endowment for the Arts, 2008), 11

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3

The diagram in Figure 1 is from the SPPA and illustrates the statistics of attendance in art activity by U.S. adults between May 2007 and May 2008. The category with the least attendance is Opera performances, which were attended by less than five million U.S. adults. Although the 2002 survey shows a slight decline in opera attendance in the 10 years preceding that survey, the 2008 survey presents a much greater decrease in only 6 years.

Figure 2¹⁹

Percentage of U.S. Adult Population Attending Arts Performances: 1982-2008[†]

					Change		Rate of change	
	1982	1992	2002	2008	2002-2008	1982-2008	2002-2008	1982-2008
Jazz	9.6%	10.6%	10.8%	7.8%	-3.0 pp	-1.8 pp	-28%	-19%
Classical music	13.0%	12.5%	11.6%	9.3%	-2.3 pp	-3.7 pp	-20%	-29%
Opera	3.0%	3.3%	3.2%	2.1%	-1.1 pp	-0.9 pp	-34%	-30%
Musical plays	18.6%	17.4%	17.1%	16.7%	-0.4* pp	-1.9 pp	-2%*	-10%
Non-musical plays	11.9%	13.5%	12.3%	9.4%	-2.9 pp	-2.5 pp	-24%	-21%
Ballet	4.2%	4.7%	3.9%	2.9%	-1.0 pp	-1.3 pp	-26%	-31%

Figure 2 shows the percentage of U.S. adults attending arts performances for multiple categories, and the decrease in attendance for each survey conducted from 1982-2008. In the 1982 survey, the figure for opera attendance was 3.0%; this total rose to 3.3% in the 1992 survey, and slightly decreased to 3.2% in 2002. There was a significant decrease in 2008 to 2.1%, a figure that is lower than the initial study conducted in 1982. The decrease in the percentage of change for attendance was the least in Opera from 1982-2008. It is the rate of change that presents a greater concern, which was 34% between 2002 and 2008 and the fastest

¹⁹ Ibid., 3

pace of all the categories. Due to the rate of change this issue needs to be addressed immediately; the possible repercussions of not addressing the problem are a cause for concern. The continuation or acceleration of this trend could affect opera in the future.

Figure 3²⁰

Percentage of Adults Ages 18-24 Attending Arts Events in 1982 and 2008

	1982	2008	Change	Rate of change
Jazz	17.5%	7.3%	-10.2 pp	-58%
Classical music	11.0%	6.9%	-4.1 pp	-37%
Opera	2.0%	1.2%	-0.8* pp	-40%*
Musicals	16.6%	14.5%	-2.1* pp	-13%*
Non-musical plays	10.7%	8.2%	-2.5 pp	-23%
Ballet	3.9%	2.5%	-1.4 pp	-36%
Art museums	22.7%	22.9%	+0.2* pp	+1%*

Changes in attendance were further investigated by the NEA and broken down into specific age groups. The “Long term trends suggest fundamental shifts in the relationship between age and arts attendance.”²¹ Figure 3 shows the percentage of adults, ages 18-24, who attended an arts events from the 1982 and 2008 surveys, along with the percentage change and rate. This age group displayed a -40% rate of change from the initial survey. The drop from 2.0% to 1.2% was one of the most rapid of all the categories. This generation will be the bulk of audiences in the future. If they are not attending currently and there is no attempt to reeducate

²⁰ Ibid., 4

²¹ Ibid., 5

their listening habits, the likelihood that they will continue to ignore opera is great. Traditional education is over between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one for most adults. If an interest in opera has not been established by this age, it cannot be assumed they will seek out operatic experiences without an introduction or education.

Figure 4²²

Percentage of Adults Ages 45-54 Attending Arts Events in 2002 and 2008

	2002	2008	Change	Rate of change
Jazz	13.9%	9.8%	-4.1 pp	-30%
Classical music	15.2%	10.2%	-5.0 pp	-33%
Opera	4.0%	2.4%	-1.6 pp	-40%
Musicals	19.3%	17.4%	-1.9* pp	-10%*
Non-musical plays	15.2%	8.7%	-6.5 pp	-43%
Ballet	5.1%	3.2%	-1.9 pp	-37%
Art museums	32.9%	23.3%	-9.6 pp	-29%

As reported in the SPPA, the largest segment of art audiences has been in the 45-54 age group historically. Figure 4 illustrates that from 2002 to 2008 this group showed a precipitous decline in attendance, radically decreasing the audience size at a rate of 40% in six years. This proves the need for an immediate solution to the problem of opera attendance. The previously discussed age group illustrates a potential problem for future opera listeners; however, a decline in the 45-54 range is affecting present opera audiences.

²² Ibid., 5

Figure 5²³

Percentage of College-Educated Adults Attending Arts Events: 1982-2008

(Bachelor's degree or higher)

					Change		Rate of change	
	1982	1992	2002	2008	2002-2008	1982-2008	2002-2008	1982-2008
Jazz	19.4%	22.1%	20.9%	14.9%	-6.0 pp	-4.5 pp	-29%	-23%
Classical music	33.1%	28.0%	25.9%	20.1%	-5.8 pp	-13.0 pp	-22%	-39%
Opera	8.0%	8.0%	7.9%	5.2%	-2.7 pp	-2.8 pp	-34%	-35%
Musicals	40.5%	32.8%	32.6%	32.7%	+0.1* pp	-7.8 pp	<1%*	-19%
Non-musical plays	30.2%	28.1%	25.5%	19.8%	-5.7 pp	-10.4 pp	-22%	-34%
Ballet	11.0%	10.1%	9.0%	6.3%	-2.7 pp	-4.7 pp	-30%	-43%
Art museums	49.2%	51.6%	50.5%	44.5%	-6.0 pp	-4.7 pp	-12%	-10%

Participation in the arts has always increased with a group's education level. "Previous research has shown that education which closely correlates with income levels is a key predictor of arts attendance."²⁴ All past NEA surveys show an increase of arts activity for college educated adults. Figure 5 reveals even the most educated groups in America participated far less in the arts between the 1982 and 2008 surveys. Opera attendance decreased at a rate of 34% from 2002-2008 in the college-educated when the rate of decrease was only 1% in the preceding studies. This research is disturbing as college-educated audiences were far more likely to attend or participate in the arts in the past. Opera has always relied upon the educated population for attendance; however, the chart indicates opera's future is uncertain and innovative approaches may need to be explored for

²³ Ibid., 5

²⁴ Ibid., 6

opera to survive. “College-educated audiences (including those with advanced degrees and certifications), have curbed their attendance in nearly all art forms.”²⁵

Figure 6²⁶

Percentage of U.S. Adult Population Performing or Creating Art: 1992-2008

	1992†	2002	2008	Change	
				2002-2008	1992-2008
Performing:					
Jazz	1.7%	1.3%	1.3%	0 pp	-0.4* pp
Classical music	4.2%	1.8%	3.0%	+1.2 pp	-1.2 pp
Opera	1.1%	0.7%	0.4%	-0.3 pp	-0.7 pp
Choir/chorus	6.3%	4.8%	5.2%	+0.4* pp	-1.1 pp
Musical plays	3.8%	2.4%	0.9%	-1.5 pp	-2.9 pp
Non-musical plays	1.6%	1.4%	0.8%	-0.6 pp	-0.8 pp
Dance	8.1%	4.3%	2.1%	-2.2 pp	-6.0 pp
Making:					
Painting/drawing	9.6%	8.6%	9.0%	+0.4* pp	-0.6* pp
Pottery/ceramics	8.4%	6.9%	6.0%	-0.9 pp	-2.4 pp
Weaving/sewing	24.8%	16.0%	13.1%	-2.9 pp	-11.7 pp
Photography	11.6%	11.5%	14.7%	+3.2 pp	+3.1 pp
Creative writing	7.4%	7.0%	6.9%	-0.1* pp	-0.5* pp

The 2008 survey shows a variety of situations for the performing and creation of art. Although Figure 6 shows a drop in the creation and performance of opera from 2002 to 2008, other arts presented small changes and even some recovery from previous surveys. The rate of change between 1992 and 2008 was -0.7%, which means there are fewer opportunities for exposure to opera. The

²⁵ Ibid., 6

²⁶ Ibid., 6

categories that have increased, such as classical music, choir/chorus, painting/drawing, and photography are also categories that can be found in the public education curriculum. This suggests the need for educational opportunities in opera.

There are many factors which could negatively influence patronage. Many operas are composed in a foreign language which creates a perception that operas are incomprehensible and difficult to enjoy. Another issue is the view of opera as an elite form of entertainment, which is held by participants and nonparticipants alike. Stereotypes exist possibly because of the way opera is presented in popular entertainment. Many forms of popular entertainment, such as movies, have depicted opera singers as Brünnhilde, a large woman with a spear, helmet, and breastplate. Popular culture has also had an effect in determining what forms of entertainment have become archaic. Opera has been overtaken by this judgment. The length of operas are also perceived as long and drawn out therefore, to time consuming. A community opera program can present the opportunity for an educational process that will present to the public a positive opera experience and help eradicate stereotypes.

During the current economic crisis society has modified their entertainment preferences to suit their financial situation. The financial burden of purchasing tickets can place a strain on the participant; therefore, entertainment is chosen carefully and often opera is ignored. Although there is a decrease in audience attendance, the SPPA has recorded that 40% of adults view or listen to performances online. This research also states that more Americans are viewing

recordings of arts events than attending them. A direct experience compared to an indirect experience could be more fulfilling. Introducing them to an opera production through active participation might encourage them to support live performances.

The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts clearly shows a decline in attendance of operatic events. This decline is apparent throughout the survey and indicates a necessity for immediate action. Groups that have in past surveys supported opera are now decreasing their attendance. The population is not being educated about opera, and stereotypes are formed by popular forms of entertainment. Although solutions have been attempted, such as the Live at the MET in HD they are not reaching the groups who require education. Further educational opportunities need to be explored, such as developing a community opera program by introducing an opera to a small community.

Community Opera as a Solution

As a result of the decline in opera attendance, opera companies such as Cleveland Opera, which was not able to present a single opera in 2011, were forced to cut back. Donald Rosenberg published an article in *The Plain Dealer* entitled “Opera Cleveland scaling back but not bowing out.”²⁷ Rosenberg begins says “The world of grand opera won't be so grand in Cleveland next year and possibly thereafter. The recession that hit the nation's arts organizations hard has

²⁷ Donald Resenberg, “Opera Cleveland scaling back but not bowing out” *The Plain Dealer*, http://www.cleveland.com/musicdance/index.ssf/2010/08/opera_cleveland_scaling_back_b.html (12 August 2010).

forced Opera Cleveland to present no productions at all in 2011.”²⁸ The decline in opera attendance was a major contributing factor to the cancellation of the 2010 season. “Cole²⁹ and board president Pauline Ramig said sharp drops in ticket sales and donations had prompted the board to cancel the production of Massenet's *Werther* that was scheduled to end the 2010-11 season in April.”³⁰

A possible solution for the declining attendance of opera is the introduction of community opera. Through a community experience, contributors will gain knowledge that can help create further interest in opera. Whether they participate as an audience member or more actively within the production, the experience can encourage members to seek out future involvement not only as a listener, but possibly as a performer or support crew member. As a result of this experience, communities could also be motivated to continue the development of community opera programs as an outward manifestation of the importance they place on artistic forms of expression.

There are those who view art as....all about giving individuals ...the prerogative to express their feelings and views. There are others who see art as part of the process of the individual in the context of the community and the community coming to consciousness of itself. In the first case the artist is seen as a symbol of the antagonistic relationship between the individual and society. In the second case, the artist symbolizes the individual within the context of a dynamic relationship with a community....Obviously the latter view is the one that I identify with...that gives basis to the notion that the artist is the vehicle for a force

²⁸ Ibid.,

²⁹ In reference to William Cole, the executive director of the Cleveland opera.

³⁰ Donald Resenberg, “Opera Cleveland scaling back but not bowing out” *The Plain Dealer*, http://www.cleveland.com/musicdance/index.ssf/2010/08/opera_cleveland_scaling_back_b.html (12 August 2010).

greater than him or herself...it includes the whole spirit life that we participate in, as well as the whole political, social and economic life.³¹

To achieve these goals, a society must view the artist as a part of the community in order to encourage and support the opera program through participation. The researcher was prompted to use Shreve, Ohio as the small community for this study. Although the researcher did not grow up in the village of Shreve, Ohio; she, as the artist, had already been established in the community as the music director at Shreve United Methodist Church. Due to this previous association, recognition of the artist as a part of that community had already been achieved, leading to the willing participation of the community members and establishing the foundation for this research.

Not only was the researcher/artist established as a member of the community, there was also precedence for a special presentation during major holidays. The community had traditionally selected a cantata or musical for Easter and Christmas. This allowed an opportunity to present an opera applicable to one of these holidays. Christmas was chosen because opera traditionally was not allowed during the Lenten season. Even though *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is not biblical, its subject matter is related to the Christmas story, and was easy to integrate into the traditional Christmas program already established by the church.

The initial strategy was to educate, and enrich the lives of those in the

³¹Jan Cohen- Cruz, *Local Acts: Community-based Performance in the United States*. (Piscataway, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 60.

community, and to form a program that could be continued. The researcher chose to implement a basic program that would inform the community about the production of an opera. A need for education became quickly apparent since there were many misconceptions about the characteristics of opera. Most members of the community believed all operas were in a foreign language and consisted of only secular content. Another common misconception was the image of “the fat lady” as a character. The researcher attempted to correct these misconceptions through the program; however, the choice of the opera employed was very important.

The program implemented by the researcher used *Amahl and the Night Visitors* as a case study for bringing an opera to a small community. The selection of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* was carefully determined in regards to the resources available, the venue, and the appeal to the participants and audience members. Shreve United Methodist Church already had soprano and baritone soloists and a chorus available for the production. Since *Amahl and the Night Visitors* requires two sopranos, one tenor, two baritones, one bass, and a chorus, there were few additional vocalists needed. The church already had most of the costumes to perform the opera, using costumes from past Christmas and Easter productions. Since this opera is so popular, vocal scores³² were easily available and reasonably priced through online distributors.

Since the opera was to be performed at Shreve United Methodist Church, the opera’s content had to be approved by the pastor and other participants.

³² Gian Carlo Menotti, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (Milwaukee, WI: G. Schirmer, 1997)

Although *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is not a biblical story, it is a morality opera and has spiritual content. King Melchoir tells the Mother this child will base his kingdom on love and will bring us new life.

“Oh, woman, you may keep the gold. The child we seek does not need our gold. On love, on love alone He will build His Kingdom. His pierced hand will hold no scepter. His haloed head will wear no crown. His might will not be built on your toil. Swifter than lightning He will soon walk among us. He will bring us new life and receive our death, and the keys to His city belong to the poor.”³³

In this church, the traditional venue for the Christmas program is the sanctuary. Since there is only one small set for *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, it could easily be integrated into the church sanctuary.

The storyline had great appeal to the participants and the audience because it expounds on the traditional story of the Three Wise Men coming to celebrate the birth of the Christ child. It also has classic storytelling characteristics that would appeal to most audience or participant. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is similar to other classic Christmas tales such as *The Little Drummer Boy* and Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* presents the account of a poor, crippled child who is miraculously healed through his act of kindness. People can connect to this subject matter because it is approachable; a simple familiar, yet touching storyline. The opera is appropriate for adults as well as children of all ages, making it an excellent choice for a Christmas program at Shreve United Methodist Church. Another basic attribute of this opera is the fact that it is sung in English, allowing the audience to focus

³³ Ibid., 55-56.

on the actual opera instead of a translation during the performance. Choosing an opera in the vernacular was also a key factor in the chorus' willingness to participate.

Since the opera selected effectively met the needs of the community, the dynamic relationship between the artist and the community was formed naturally. Although the relationship had been achieved there were still some issues that had to be resolved before complete participation could be established. At first, some participants were unsure of the outcome of presenting such a program at Shreve United Methodist Church. After becoming familiar with the opera they became excited about the opportunity. The Chancel Choir was hesitant about the idea of performing in an opera, and the music seemed much harder to learn than previous pieces selected by the choir director. After a few rehearsals, the choir members began stating the music was not as difficult as originally perceived. Another concern of the chorus members was the expectation to be onstage and active during the entire opera. Once this misconception about the involvement of the choir during the opera was settled, they changed their opinion, and became more enthusiastic about performing in the opera.

Once these concerns were addressed, the participants became fully involved in the process. Community members put a great deal of effort into the costumes and the making of the set. Although Shreve United Methodist Church possessed many of the costumes needed for the opera, additional costumes were rented, borrowed, or made. Costumes were rented for the characters of Amahl, the Page and the Mother from the costume shop at the University of Akron. A

nearby church donated several costumes supplying enough for the children in the program. Several women involved in a sewing group at the church made additional costumes for the participating adults. These women were excited about being involved in the opera and some even came to rehearsals to see the costumes on stage. The set was built by talented men at the church and one of the young men donated his time to paint and create scenery for the set. Since he is known in the community for being a brilliant artist, people were stopping by to see his work before the final performance. As the set was built many local people were anxious to see the final product. As a result of the interest being generated, news about the opera spread through the church and the surrounding communities.

In order to encourage future exploration of opera by the participants and audience members, an opera that was accessible presented the greatest chance of success. By presenting an opera in Shreve, Ohio, a common goal formed within that community which led participants to work together. Common perspectives can be based upon shared views, such as morals, political or religious beliefs, or cultural practices. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* brought the people of Shreve, Ohio together through religious beliefs and classic story telling. This opera united people in a common goal and brought a sense of pride to those who participated and those who observed the opera.

Establishing the Community Opera Program

When establishing a community opera program, many factors, unique to each situation, must be considered. Before any work on the actual opera could be done, the project had to be approved by the Worship Committee and the Pastor at

Shreve United Methodist Church. Preparation for presentation to the committee and pastor not only included selection of an appropriate opera, but also researching the opera, so any concerns or questions could be addressed. To obtain the approval of the committee certain parameters must be met: budget, language, time constraints, and acceptable religious content. After careful consideration, and review of the above factors, the Community Opera Program was approved and the literature to be used was *Amahl and the Night Visitors* by Gian Carlo Menotti.

As stated previously, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* was replacing the traditional Christmas program presented at Shreve United Methodist Church. It is a small church that plans an annual budget carefully and in a timely fashion. Therefore, the opera had to be economical and meet the budgeted financial expectations of the Christmas program. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* could easily be tailored to the monetary constraints of the Christmas budget. The set for the opera is modest and can be built on a small budget. Since Menotti wrote it to be performed live on television, only one set is used throughout the production. The opera also has very easily attainable props, either through donations by church members or purchases at any local store. As mentioned before, the majority of costumes were available at the church or borrowed. The few remaining costumes were rented for \$120 from the costume shop at The University of Akron.³⁴ The cast of the opera is very small and was comprised of church members and four volunteers. Since the opera took the place of the church service, the cost of

³⁴ The cost for the rented costumes can be found in the budget letter in Appendix Four.

printing pamphlets was absorbed by the general budget. Distribution of publicity was free, since choir members and participants took posters and hung them in nearby businesses. The advertisements themselves were made at the church which was cost effective. The Daily Record, a newspaper in the Wooster area, ran a free add for two consecutive weeks before the performance. The lighting in the sanctuary was sufficient to see the action, therefore rental of any spotlights or any theatrical equipment was not needed. The room was small enough that no sound reinforcement was required.

Comprehension and duration of the opera were important factors to the Worship Committee. The length of a normal service at Shreve United Methodist Church is an hour and fifteen minutes. Since the opera would serve as a church service, the length of the opera could not exceed that duration of time. The music director would not allow the program to be in a foreign language since the opera acted as a sermon. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* met these requirements because it was written in English and is less than an hour in length. Although the committee and Pastor were satisfied with *Amahl and the Night Visitors* considering the length and language, other stipulations were suggested before approval could be given. The committee members recommended that subtitles be used during the performance, in case audience members had difficulty understanding the performers. Since the opera would be presented as the Christmas program, acceptable religious content had to be displayed within the opera itself. The opera had to be Christian in nature and preferably relate to the birth of Christ. Information about the history of the opera and composer, as well

as the story, proved to be a great asset during the approval process. Familiarity with the historical content, storyline, and music enabled the researcher to inspire enthusiasm for the project by helping people relate to the composer, and ultimately the characters in the opera. A synopsis of the opera was prepared, and written in a way that would intrigue the committee members. The presentation to the committee was comprised of four major points described below.

Since religious content was such a deciding factor as to whether or not the opera would be allowed to replace the Christmas program, the first section of the presentation included a relevant historical background about Menotti and his opera.

“Menotti’s warmhearted Christmas tale *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is the most frequently performed operas in the world, with more than 500 performances annually around the globe. This extraordinary popularity is due partly to its inspirational message and religious content, partly to its relative brevity and ease of production, but mostly to its amazing effectiveness on stage.”³⁵

Menotti had written a number of religious works such as: *The Saint of Bleeker Street*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and *Missa ‘O Pulchritudo.’* This information was given to the committee in order to show that Menotti was spiritual and wrote about religious subjects. The effectiveness of this opera is due in part to the realistic setting. The struggle of the characters and their position in life are easily relatable. Sharing this information with the committee established a connection to the opera encouraging approval and support.

³⁵ Ken Wlaschin, *Gian Carlo Menotti on Screen* (North Carolina, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1999), 11.

The importance of the inspiration for *Amahl and the Night Visitors* was presented during the second section of the presentation. The opera was inspired by the painting The Adoration of the Magi by Hieronymus Bosch which was commissioned for Peter Scheyve and Agnes de Gamme between 1495 and 1499. This altarpiece triptych depicts the adoration, and giving of gifts to the Christ Child by the three Magi. The centerpiece of the painting portrays Jesus sitting on the Virgin Mary's lap with the three Magi present, and is the inspiration for the opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Although this is the main focus of the work, the other panels depict shepherds and peasants surrounding the manger and peering in through holes in the walls and roof. The viewpoint of the peasants and shepherds are used by Menotti in order to revitalize the story. By telling it from the viewpoint of the common people he makes it realistic and imaginable.

“Gian Carlo Menotti took opera out of the opera houses and gave it back to the general public. His operas were sung in English and heard on the radio, staged on Broadway, composed for television, made into movies, presented in cathedrals and rewritten for children. He was one of the first to write an opera for the radio and the very first to write an opera for the television. He is the only composer to film his own opera and is by far the most televised American composer.”³⁶

Sharing this information with the committee allowed them to realize that a connection with the audience was easily achievable. This relationship with the audience would ensure success and promote enthusiasm; therefore, the committee requested this information be shared with the audience through program notes in the pamphlet.

³⁶ Ken Wlaschin, *Gian Carlo Menotti on Screen* (North Carolina, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1999), 3.

Convincing the committee of the music's accessibility was more difficult. This stemmed from the fact that some held the view that opera had to be sung by trained opera singers, and could not be sung by amateurs; also the choir had not ventured into classical music at this point. Menotti wrote *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, one of his most popular and beloved operas, in such a way that it could be performed either by trained professional singers or talented amateurs.

“The roles, particularly the main part for a boy soprano, are skillfully conceived so that the work can be performed by amateurs. The charm and clear diatonicism of the work have helped to make it one of the most frequently performed operas in the 20th century.”³⁷

Menotti's music is easy to listen to because of the memorable melodies and the natural declamation. His use of rhythmical structures in the vocal lines matches the stress of the English language, is easily understood by the audience and is singable by the performer. His music is very approachable for musicians at various levels.

“Like Puccini he (Menotti) gives first place to the human voice and the effective theatrical moment. Menotti's melodies are tonal, sometimes with a modal flavour, and often easily remembered. Sequence and repetition are common, but aria-like passages tend to be brief so as not to interrupt the dramatic flow. The continuous recitative-like passages set the text with naturalness and clarity. His harmony is tonal sometimes using parallel chords over a clear and simple tonal basis.”³⁸

Both video and audio recordings of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* were provided to the committee. Once this information was shared with the committee their

³⁷ Stanley Sadie, *The New Grove Dictionary of music and Musicians* (Washington DC, Peninsula Publishers Limited, 1980), 166.

³⁸ Stanley Sadie, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Washington DC, Peninsula Publishers Limited, 1980), 166.

fears about the music were alleviated.

“The best summary of his achievements is by Hitchcock: ‘Menotti combined the theatrical sense of a popular playwright and a Pucciniesque musical vocabulary with an Italianate love of liquid language and a humane interest in characters as real human beings; the result was an opera more accessible than anyone else’s at the time’.”³⁹

Last, a synopsis of the opera solidified the approval of the committee members. By informing the committee of the storyline, interest was heightened and the worship committee members became active participants. Members of the committee found the story and the presentation of the gospel message insightful and inspiring. The committee felt that this information was so important that they wanted the synopsis to be explained in the church services two weeks prior to the performance and handed out at the opera. The Synopsis of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* can be found in Appendix One.

After presenting a synopsis and the history of the opera and its composer, the researcher gained the approval of the Worship Committee. It was agreed that *Amahl and the Night Visitors* would be performed on December 3, 2010 for the annual Christmas program. The date of the opera was added to the church calendar and a newsletter was sent to the congregation. The work of producing the opera began immediately.

Implementing the Opera

The premise for starting a Community Opera Program is to educate and breakdown stereotypes, in order to generate more interest and encourage people to

³⁹ Stanley Sadie, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Washington DC, Peninsula Publishers Limited, 1980), 166.

patronize opera. The objective of this chapter is to present a summary of a basic introduction program that is applicable as a guide to others who wish to create similar programs. The process in which the community opera program was developed is discussed in this chapter. Walther Volbach's *Problems of Opera Production* has a basic outline, easily modified for this project. The research has been evaluated and separated into eight sections as follows: Preparation, Rehearsal, Set Construction and Props, Pamphlet, Budget, Advertising, Dress Rehearsal, and Performance.

Preparation

Preparing the opera included ordering music, obtaining royalties, and casting the opera. The music was readily available through online resources. The scores were purchased for approximately \$15 plus shipping through amazon.com. Royalties were obtained through G. Schirmer, Inc. & Associated Music Publishers, Inc. for a \$175 fee. A contract was emailed to the researcher from G. Schirmer, Inc. on September 9, 2010. The royalty contract can be found in Appendix Four.

The church budget did not allow financial compensation for participants; therefore, all those involved were volunteers. Eleanor Kear, a member of the piano staff at the University of Akron, was the first collaborative artist the researcher secured. She agreed to donate her services including rehearsing with the cast, coaching the musicians, and performing the opera. The lack of funding created a problem obtaining cast members for the title roles; however, enthusiastic

university student volunteers solved the issue. No formal auditions were held since most of the cast members came highly recommended by professors at the University of Akron.

Even though the role of Amahl, a young crippled boy about the age of 12, calls for a boy soprano, it is often cast with a light lyric soprano. Amahl was performed by Marissa Dentz, a University of Akron freshman with a light lyric soprano voice. The researcher, performed the role of the Mother, a mezzo-soprano or soprano. King Kasper, tenor, was performed by Jaron LeGrair, a recent graduate of the University of Akron. Charles Miller, baritone, one of the Shreve United Methodist Church choir members, performed the role of King Melchior. King Balthazar, bass, was performed by a former University of Akron graduate, Joe Guy. The final cast member Adam Fehrenbach, bass, a student at the University of Akron, performed the role of the Page. Due to budget limitations, the dancing shepherds were omitted and the scene was cut from the opera. The townspeople were performed by a mixture of Shreve United Methodist Church Chancel Choir members, faculty members, and students from The University of Akron.⁴⁰

Rehearsal

The time commitment needed to rehearse the opera was extensive. In order to run competent rehearsals the researcher needed detailed knowledge of the music and staging. These rehearsals must be run professionally by starting and

⁴⁰ The townspeople cast were Dr. Laurie Lashbrook, Samantha Steinbach, Bryon Dickon, Megan Ross, Ruth Merdith, Robin Lawson, Nancy Myers, Janet Shaw, Peggy Gray, Kelly Dieringer, Marty Black, Tami Galliher, Dan Hartzler, Dennis Rinehart, Dan Allen, Bill Lawson, & Steve Myers.

ending promptly, in order to ensure positive participation. Adequate time was required for the cast to learn and memorize the material; rehearsals began four months prior to the performance date. The researcher provided private rehearsals with the cast members and a mandatory weekly group rehearsal. A detailed schedule of rehearsals including times and sections of music to be prepared was emailed to each cast member. Amahl received two rehearsals a week, one with and one without the group, as did King Melchior. Diction coachings were provided to the cast by the head of the voice department at The University of Akron.

Rehearsals with the cast members, who were all professional musicians or candidates in music programs, were different from those with the Chancel Choir; which consists of community volunteers. Music was given at the beginning of September and rehearsals were arranged weekly; music was learned a phrase at a time for each part. CDs were made by the researcher for each vocal part which consisted of four tracks for each piece. Track one had individual parts (soprano, alto, tenor, & bass) played by the piano. A second track had parts coupled into soprano and tenor, or alto and bass. The appropriate vocal line was sung while the other part played on the piano. The individual vocal part was sung with accompaniment on the third track. Lastly, each CD had a recording of the final composition sung by a professional choir. Using this style of learning proved to be very practical when dealing with a large group of people who cannot attend each rehearsal.

Staging rehearsals were restricted and difficult to manage because the

rehearsal area was much smaller than the stage. Since the room needed to be used for other functions the researcher arrived early before each rehearsal and set up the room. There were only two rehearsals in the performance space before the dress rehearsal. Staging for the villagers had to be simplified because of their limited acting experience.

Set Construction and Props

The building of the set was delegated to a member of the church who recruited volunteers. After the researcher sketched a diagram of the set and all its details, construction was carried out exclusively by the set crew. Since the time for rehearsals was so extensive, having volunteers to construct the set was invaluable. The setup and strike was also handled by this crew. Adjustments to the set were made for the ease of construction; therefore, staging modifications were necessary during the final rehearsals.

There are few props used in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Most of the props were easy to secure since many of these items were everyday household possessions and donated by church members. A few props had to be constructed for the opera. A thick tree branch was used for the crutch; in order for Amahl to carry it a sling was attached, and fabric was added to the top for padding. King Kasper's box was the only prop that had to be designed as a set piece. It needed to support the weight of characters and be a functional prop. The box was similar to a cedar chest with three small drawers, stained mahogany and ornately decorated. King Kasper's box was modified several times because of its weight and size.

Pamphlet

The pamphlet consisted of a cast list and basic description of each role, names of all volunteers involved in the opera, a brief history of the opera and composer, biographies of each cast member, and a thank you to all who participated. The pamphlet can be found in Appendix Three. Since the opera was performed in English, no translation was provided. As mentioned previously, subtitles were projected in case people had difficulty understanding the singers. The subtitles were provided by the researcher and the equipment was run by a light and sound technician.

Budget

The budget for the Christmas program was fifteen hundred dollars; total cost for the opera was \$952.69. Included in the opera costs were the purchase of musical scores for all participants, royalty fees, the set, props, costumes, and flowers for all performers. Costs were cut significantly due to the work of several volunteers. A list of expenditures can be found in Appendix Two.

Advertising

The opera was advertised throughout the community through fliers produced by the researcher. Volunteers placed them in strategic places in Shreve, Ohio and the surrounding towns, villages, and cities. The Daily Record, a local newspaper, ran an article free of charge for two consecutive weeks about the opera. The church advertised *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in their monthly newsletter, and announcements were made from the pulpit by the pastor and other members of the church every Sunday for a month before the performance. Fliers

were given to each cast and chorus member to hand out to friends and family, and the name, date, and time of the opera were posted on a sign in front of the church.

Dress Rehearsal

Preceding the dress rehearsal on Wednesday, December 1, 2010, a dinner was prepared for all participants by the church's outreach ministry. At dinner, the cast and the Chancel Choir members were able to go through last minute questions and concerns with the researcher. This session provided clarity and since there were no last minute changes which could confuse amateurs, the rehearsal went smoothly. This allowed the cast and chorus members to supportively interacted with one another encouraging their excitement and increasing their enjoyment of the performance. The sound and light technicians received their instructions weeks prior to the dress rehearsal and were comfortable with their assignments. Microphones were tested at the beginning of the rehearsal but were removed since sound reinforcement was unnecessary.

Performance

Many factors helped make the performance run smoothly on Friday, December 3, 2010 at 7:30pm. Call for the cast and chorus was at five in the evening, allowing time for a musical rehearsal for the chorus, and a run through of any difficult passages of music or staging for the cast members. The remaining time was for dressing in costume and mental preparation for the performance. The performance began five minutes late to allow audience members the opportunity to read the synopsis of the opera and a short speech was given by the researcher to explain the plot. This allowed the audience to focus on the

performance and not be distracted by reading the synopsis during the performance. The role of King Balthazar is to be played by an African-American; however, no ethnic performers were available. Since his aria utilizes the contrast between black and white, it lost some of its meaning. Kasper was played by an African American so Amahl's text remained appropriate "and one of them is black."⁴¹ The performance was very smooth in spite of a minor problem with a prop. Amahl's crutch was uncomfortable causing the performer to switch legs during the opera.

⁴¹ Gian Carlo Menotti, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (Milwaukee, WI: G. Schirmer, 1997), 18

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS

Introducing community opera into a small society can help increase opera appreciation. According to the NEA *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, opera attendance has dropped at a rate of 34% in six years; immediate solutions are necessary. Many factors affected the implementation of a community opera program in Shreve, Ohio. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* fit the criteria that was established by the committee, and provided the best possible results for widespread interest from the community. The involvement and participation in the process for both the audience and the participants was educational and enriching. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* had positive results on the community of Shreve, Ohio.

There were many circumstances supporting the conclusion of a successful result concerning this project. Attendance for this opera was nearly 200 people; many of whom came from out of town and had never been to an opera previously. Not only is 200 a large audience for a small community project, attendees from out of town without previous experience shows the program influenced a wider audience than originally expected. This supports the hypothesis that a community opera program can create interest and enthusiasm. The participants communicated their excitement for the opera, resulting in interest beyond the community itself.

Other examples of a successful result include audience members approaching the researcher and discussing their experience during the reception.

Stereotypes such as unapproachable subject matter, incomprehensible language, and complex music were dispelled. Audience members found the plot extremely entertaining and easy to follow; they were able to understand the words, and the music was very enjoyable. They were so pleased with their experience that they asked if *Amahl and the Night Visitors* could be performed at their own church. Proving that introducing an opera into one community will create interest beyond that community and further assist the problem of declining opera audience.

Although the expected results show a successful outcome, there were others that were unanticipated. The opera was great publicity for the church, and the Pastor viewed the opera as a wonderful outreach ministry. His enthusiasm is displayed in the section quoted below, the full document can be found in Appendix 5.

“Anyway, it was a great evening and, I believe, a great blessing to all who attended or participated. We were impressed with the good number of students who were willing to make the long drive over from the university for the practices and performance. The “regulars” in our choir enjoyed working with them, as we found ourselves stretched in both singing and acting ability. And it seemed to me there was quite a positive impact on the students as well. It was also exciting to see how different people in the church came together to provide staging, wardrobe, props, etc.”

These outcomes show a community opera can be influential and successful in ways that go beyond opera appreciation, and can affect people intimately. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* perfectly fit the criteria for this project; however, the continuation of the project requires the consideration of operas with similar characteristics. *L’enfant Prodigue* by Debussy is a short one act opera that requires a two sopranos and a baritone. It is the story of the prodigal son and can

be adapted into a church service. Other secular options include *A Hand of Bridge* by Samuel Barber which requires a soprano, tenor, baritone and contralto. A list of one act operas can be found on Wikipedia⁴². Although *Amahl and the Night Visitors* fit the situation other opera could have been candidates and will be considered for future opera performances.

As an introductory program, the intention is for future endeavors concerning opera to be implemented in the community of Shreve, Ohio. In the pastor's letter this intention is expressed "From the church family and from the community outside our church I've heard nothing but good comments, and more than a few have suggested we might try something like this again." The invitation to perform *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in other churches was considered and future performances are being planned. In addition to this, interest in other opera performances was generated from the additional participants from the university. As a result *Captain Lovelock*, by John Duke, was performed at Shreve United Methodist Church the following summer. Participants from Shreve United Methodist Church since then have organized a bus trip to attend another opera. The project was a success because it inspired others to continue interest in opera and went even further by enhancing the life of the community.

⁴² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:One-act_operas

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APPENDIX I

SYNOPSIS OF *AM AHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS*

Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is set in a small town, somewhere on the road to Bethlehem. Known for his tall tales, Amahl, a young crippled boy, begins to tell his mother of an enormous star in the sky. Tired of his constant lying the mother scolds him and dismisses his story; reminded of their extreme poverty the mother mentions that soon they will have to go begging. Amahl tells his mother not to worry, he will be a good beggar, and they both go to sleep. Shortly after, Amahl and his mother wake to find three kings knocking at their door. The Kings explain that they have been following a star. Tired, and in need of a place to rest the three kings ask for lodging. The mother tells the three kings they are welcome to stay; she gets wood for the fireplace, and has Amahl tell the townspeople to bring food for the Kings. The visitors display their gifts to the Child King of frankincense, gold, and myrrh. When the mother returns she tries to explain to her guests that Amahl is very similar to the child that they are looking for, and in need of their gifts. The kings explain the significance of the child they are looking for, but she does not understand. Desperately trying to make a correlation between this child and her son, she tells the kings Amahl has the same qualities they seek.

Returning with the townspeople, Amahl plays his instrument while the kings receive gifts and watch a lively dance. After the festivities fade and the townspeople go home the kings fall asleep. The Mother, obsessed with the gold, asks if wealthy people know the value of their possessions. Knowing what a small bit of gold could do for her son, she decides to steal a piece. A servant shouts at her and wakes everyone in the house. Melchior, a king, tells her to keep

the gold; stating the child they seek does not need gold, and will build His kingdom on love. The mother, realizing the significance of such a child, affirms she has waited for such a king her whole life. She does not take the gold; instead she wishes she had material possessions to give as an offering to this child.

Amahl decides to offer the Child King his only possession, a crutch. Because of Amahl's faith and sacrifice he is instantly healed. All rejoice and give praise for this miraculous sign. Amahl joins the three Kings in their quest to find the Child King; not only to give him the crutch, but to thank him.

APPENDIX II

ROYALTY CONTRACT FROM G. SCHIRMER, INC.



G.SCHIRMER, INC. & Associated Music Publishers, Inc.
 Rental Performance Department
 445 Bellvue Road
 Chester, New York 10918
 Tel: 845-469-4699
 Fax: 845-469-7544
 www.schirmer.com

Royalty Contract

Date 9/20/2010
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Fax No.
 Trans Nr. 91282
 Account No. H14677

Bill to: Shreve United Methodist Church
 Amy Yekel
 430 North Main Street
 Shreve OH 44676

Send to: Shreve United Methodist Church
 Attn: Amy Yekel
 430 North Main Street
 Shreve
 OH 44676
 330.418.2215

Composer **Gian Carlo Menotti**

Date Required

Work **Amahl and the Night Visitors (complete opera)**

Purchase Order

Duration 0:46:00

Set #

Hereafter referred to as the "work"

Publisher **G. Schirmer, Inc.**

- The organization is hereby granted permission by the publisher/agent to present staged performances of the work on:
 12/3/2010 (1) Christmas Production Shreve, OH
- The organization hereby agrees to pay to the publisher/agent according to the following schedule (excluding applicable taxes):
Royalty fee: \$175.00 for the one performance to solo piano accompaniment
- The right granted herein includes the right to perform said work live on the stage only and does not grant the right to perform in any other medium, including but not limited to radio, television, recordings, etc.
- The organization shall not copy any part or parts of the materials supplied by the publisher/agent, nor permit said materials to leave its custody or to be used by any other person or persons. The organization agrees to return said materials at its own expense to the publisher/agent within ten (10) days from the date of the final performance, complete and in good condition, fair wear and tear excepted, unless a contract renewal is negotiated. The organization shall be liable for the replacement value of any rental materials damaged, lost or destroyed, however caused.
- Payment by the organization shall be made to the publisher/agent not later than fourteen (14) days after the final performance. The organization agrees to give the publisher/agent two (2) complimentary center orchestra seats per performance, if so requested.
- Arrangements for libretté sale shall be made by contacting our print music distributor, Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation 1-414-774-3630.
- In the program and souvenir booklet, the organization shall give performance credit as follows:
By arrangement with G. Schirmer, INC. publisher and copyright owner.
- No changes, alterations or cuts may be made to the score and parts containing the words and music to the Work

or to the way that the Work is performed on the stage without the express written permission of the Publisher.

9. The organization shall not exercise or attempt to exercise any rights with respect to said work except those limited rights as stated above.

10. Special stipulations/materials required:

Royalty fees: \$175.00

11. We warrant that we have the right to execute this license, which license contains the entire understanding between publisher/agent and organization, and no alteration or modification of any kind will be binding unless made in writing, signed by you and by a duly authorized representative of the publisher/agent's company.

Please sign all copies of this license agreement where indicated below and return one (1) copy to us for our files.

This agreement must be signed and returned to G. Schirmer, INC. within fourteen (14) days of issuance. No materials will be shipped or reserved until a signed copy of this agreement is received by G. Schirmer, INC. 445 Bellvale Road, Chester, NY 10918.

Signed: _____

Accepted and Agreed

Title: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX III

BULLETIN: AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS PERFORMANCE DEC 3,
2010

Shreve United Methodist Church

Presents

*Amahl and the
Night Visitors*

By Gian Carlo Menotti

Amy Yekel –Director

Eleanor Kear—Piano

Friday, December 3, 2010 at 7:30 PM

Shreve United Methodist Church, Shreve, Ohio

2010

Cast

<i>Amahl, a crippled boy about 12 years old</i>	Marissa Dentz
<i>His Mother</i>	Amy Louise Yekel
<i>King Kaspar, slightly deaf</i>	Jaron M LeGrair
<i>King Melchior</i>	Charles Miller
<i>King Balthazar</i>	Joseph Guy
<i>The Page, traveling with the kings</i>	Adam Fehrenbach

Shepherds and Villagers:

Dr. Laurie Lashbrook, Samantha Steinbach, Bryon Dickon, Megan Ross, Ruth Meredith, Robin Lawson, Nancy Myers, Janet Shaw, Peggy Grey, Kelly Dieringer, Marty Black, Tami Galliher, Dan Hartzler, Dennis Rinehart, Danny Allen, Bill Lawson, Steve Myers

<i>Accompanist</i>	<i>Eleanor Kear</i>
<i>Diction Coach</i>	<i>Dr. Laurie</i>
<i>Lashbrook</i>	
<i>Set Production Manager</i>	
<i>Paul McMillen Brooks Myers, Carlos Visoky</i>	

About the Opera

Amahl and the Night Visitors is an opera composed by Gian-Carlo Menotti. This opera was the first specifically commissioned for television. It symbolizes a significant milestone in the history of opera. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* was first performed by NBC Studios in New York City. The opera was broadcast live on December 24, 1951. Because of its success it aired every Christmas season after that until 1966. New York City Opera did the first professional stage premiere on April 9, 1952.

The story of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* was inspired by Hieronymus Bosch's painting "Adoration of the Magi." Menotti not only wrote the story and the libretto in English, but composed the music as well. The television premier was staged entirely by Menotti. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* has taken its place with *A Christmas Carol*, and *A Miracle on 34th Street* as a holiday classic. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* has been performed on every continent and has been translated into many languages. This opera has been seen by more people than any other opera in history.

Biographies



Marissa Dentz, (Soprano), from Kent, Ohio, is currently a student at the University of Akron. She is making her debut as a young performer in the field of opera. She has received superior ratings as a soloist at Solo and ensemble competitions. She also had the privilege of working in a master's class with Dr. John Hines in 2010. She has sung as a soloist in E.J. Thomas Hall for her Graduation Commencement from Field High School in June 2005. Marissa was accepted to the American Musical Dramatic Academy. Her future goals include becoming a professional opera singer and Graduating from The University of Akron in 2014.



Amy Louise Yekel (Soprano) received a Bachelor's degree from The University of Akron in Music Performance (2004), a Master's degree in Music Performance at Arizona State University (2006), and is currently a doctoral candidate at Arizona State University in Voice Performance. Mrs. Yekel has won numerous awards and Scholarships including: The Palm Springs Opera Scholarship, The Arizona Lyric Opera Scholarship, The Canton Civic Opera Scholarship, The Akron Symphony Chorus Scholarship, Tuesday Musical Club Scholarship, The McDowell Scholarship, The Mary S. Bower's Scholarship, The John Macdonald Scholarship, The Fairlawn United Church of Christ Scholarship, Tuesday Musical Club Finalists Scholarship, The First Grace United Church of Christ Scholarship, and The University of Akron's Vocal Performance Scholarship. Other honors and awards include: The University of Akron's Most Outstanding Student Award, and First place in the Advanced Woman's Division, Sophomore Division, and Freshman Division at NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing). Mrs. Yekel has

performed as the guest soloist for Canton Civic Opera's Viva Italia, and in Gammage auditorium for "A Night at the Opera" with conductor Jacob Harrison. She has also sung at the Spoleto Festival in Spoleto Italy, and for Akron's "First Night" program. Mrs. Yekel made her vocal debut with Arizona State University's Lyric Opera Theater as "Ariadne," in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* (2007). She has also had the privilege of performing such roles as: "Lia," in Debussy's *L'enfant Prodigue* (2007), "Pernille/Captain Lovelock," in John Duke's *Captain Lovelock* (2007), and as "Lady Brockhurst," in *The Boyfriend*(2005).



Charles Miller (Baritone) from Massillon, Ohio, is currently a student at the University of Akron. He has been a guest soloist at Shreve United Methodist Church and Faith Community Church. He also won the First Grace United Church of Christ Scholarship (2001-2002). Charles has sung in Italy's Spoleto festival with the University of Akron's Concert Choir. He made his debut at The University of Akron's opera program as "Guccio" in *Gianni Schicchi* (2001). He has also had the privilege of performing the role "Henry" in *Twelve Tickets to Christmas* (2009).



Jaron M. LeGrair (Tenor) is a recent graduate from The University of Akron where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Music. He has been featured as a guest soloist on many stages including Gospel Meets Symphony, and Summit Chorale Society. He has received Superior Ratings in all of the Ohio Music Education Association's (OMEA) Solo and Ensemble Competitions, and placed in the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) Buckeye Chapter Competition.



Joseph Guy (Bass) earned a Bachelor's degree from Cleveland State University in Voice Performance, and a Master of Music in Choral Conducting from The University of Akron. While at the University of Akron he was a Graduate Teaching Assistant and the assistant director of the Concert Choir and Chamber Choir. For two years Joseph sang with VOICI (Voices of Canton Inc.) where he sang both with the choir and as a soloist. In the summer of 2004 he traveled with the group to Assisi, Italy, to perform throughout the beautiful region of Umbria. While there, Joseph was the bass soloist in a performance of Handel's *Messiah*. He has sung for Robert Shaw, Alice Parker, Frank Jacobs, Ivan Trussler, Maurice Casey and Robert Page. He was a member of the Robert Page/Cleveland Singers (professional ensemble) for eight seasons.

He has performed with the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus, Akron Orchestra Chorus, Myriad, St. John's Cathedral Choir in Cleveland, VOICI (Voices of Canton Inc.), Summit Choral Society Materworks Chorale and various opera choruses. He created the role of Sir Francis Knollys at the world premiere of Bain Murray's *Mary Stuart: "A Queen Betrayed"*. Joseph currently sings with Singers Companye, a professional chorus from Akron. Joseph is also the Music Director for the Akron Chamber Singers and the Greater Canton Men's Chorus.



Adam Fehrenbach (Baritone) received his BA in Music at The University of Akron. He is currently pursuing a Masters of Music Education at the University of Akron. He is the choir director at Firestone Park Presbyterian Church. He teaches piano and voice at Edgewood Community Center. He is involved in the Cleveland Circle Opera Chorus.

Eleanor Kear (Pianist) from Canton received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Kent State University and taught music in the Canton City School's for 32 years. Eleanor has accompanied numerous recitals and concerts. She has accompanied *Voices of Canton*. She has been a pianist and an organist at Unity Church of Truth and Christ Presbyterian Church. Eleanor has also been the collaborative artist for programs such as Canton Symphony Chorus, Canton Civic Opera, and Akron Symphony Chorus, Akron University Opera Theater, and Concord Singers. She is a staff accompanist at the University of Akron. She is also an active chorus member at Christ Presbyterian Church.

A special thanks to all those who prepared the reception and worked behind the scenes to make this evening possible.

APPENDIX IV

LETTER OF PAID EXPENSES FOR *AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS*

SHREVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

430 North Main Street
P.O. Box 525
Shreve, OH 44676

June 4, 2011

Ms. Amy Yeakel

The following is a breakdown of the expenses relating to the Christmas Opera which was performed in December 2010 at our church:

Music:	\$ 262.49
Misc. Items (costumes, items for stage):	256.58
Lumber materials for building stage:	102.94
Costume Rental:	120.00
Amahl Rehearsal Expenses:	<u>210.68</u>

Total Amahl Expenses: \$ 952.69

The music for the program was expended from the "Music" line item of the church budget and the remaining miscellaneous expenses were expended from the "Worship" line item of the church budget. You were well below the budget for the year 2010 in both areas of the Music and Worship ministry.

If I can be of any further assistance, please advise.

Sincerely,



Karen Carlton
Church Treasurer

/kec

APPENDIX V
LETTER FROM THE PASTOR OF SHREVE UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH

To: Mrs. Amy Yekel, Music Director, Shreve UMC
From: Bill Lawson, Pastor

Dear Amy,

I'm writing to express my appreciation for all your talent, enthusiasm and hard work in bringing "Amahl and the Night Visitors" to Shreve. I think you remember how intimidating it seemed when you first suggested we could do an OPERA here!

Anyway, it was a great evening and, I believe, a great blessing to all who attended or participated. We were impressed with the good number of students who were willing to make the long drive over from the university for the practices and performance. The "regulars" in our choir enjoyed working with them, as we found ourselves stretched in both singing and acting ability. And it seemed to me there was quite a positive impact on the students as well. It was also exciting to see how different people in the church came together to provide staging, wardrobe, props, etc.

From the church family and from the community outside our church I've heard nothing but good comments, and more than a few have suggested we might try something like this again.

So.....many thanks for all you have done and are doing for this church and this community!

Blessings,
Pastor Bill