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Paul Lorton Jr
lornton@usfca.edu

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Mission Conceived versus Mission Achieved

Paul Lorton, Jr.

University of San Francisco
School of Business & Management
San Francisco, CA 94117-1045

Summary

The stated mission of an organization is, in a deductively ordered world, the encapsulation of the timeless focus of that organization from which measureable objectives can be derived to assess how well that organization is progressing toward its destiny. For arts organizations in troubled times, this coupling of mission driven direction and success ought, in theory to be tight. The effort reported here examines the degree to which an Arts organization, in particular those presenting Opera, have stayed their mission dictated course and survived, even succeeded. By looking in depth at several opera companies in the San Francisco Bay area, more broadly, opera companies through out the United States and, in summary, at other arts organizations, we will present how well the conceived missions are actually achieved and have served to drive success.

Introduction

The mission of an organization is important in moving the organization toward its desired future. As much as external factors buffet an organization with fierce pressure to drive it off course, that organization is well served if it does keep its mission in the forefront of its efforts and focuses on the mission as a guiding beacon.

Arts organizations are especially well served in difficult times if there is a clear and well-articulated mission to guide and direct their efforts at survival and endurance.

At least that is the theory.

¹ From the Opera America article on Los Angeles Opera's production of *The Fly*, 2008, The Fly make-up and special effects by Stephan Dupuis (see <http://www.operaamerica.org/applications/nawd/newworks/details.aspx?id=707>)

To support that theory there is considerable research and documented experience bolstering the position that a well articulated mission understood by all the stakeholders will produce an organization focused on achieving the clearly defined objectives which will move the organization into the future with success. Arts organizations operate under the same rules for success.

The goal of this consideration of missions conceived and achieved is to determine how successful Opera producing Arts organizations are in articulating their mission in a functional sense – not merely adopting nice sounding phrases with no buy-in by the members of the organization. Following this examination, we evaluate the level of success that can be attributed to the degree to which the mission is achieved.

In developing this examination, we will first look in depth at the mission and the mission development process in several San Francisco Bay area opera producing companies. From this information we apply a model rubric to a broader sample of Opera Companies throughout the United States, in order to refine the metric (stated mission and mission development process) by which achieved missions can be evaluated. Finally we verify the applicability of this evaluation for arts organizations in general by reviewing information from examples of organizations involved in dance, symphonic music and display of cultural artifacts.

As examples, one opera company sees “low cost” as key to its ability to bring opera to a broader public. However, factors which forced a creep upwards in ticket prices erased the mission driven competitive advantage implied in that goal without adjusting the stated goal. Has this been one contribution to difficulty in difficult times? Other companies have a certain level of quality as their goal. Without sacrificing that quality but reducing the quantity of the performances these groups seem to have been able to preserve public support and play to relatively sold-out houses.

Similarly, when we examine other arts organizations, the groups which focus on the goals that got them to their current success are surviving with some renewed and expanded commitment. Groups that set aside their core mission in order to solve what we expect will be a temporary problem (it always has been in the past), do struggle.

Background

The development human organization into a formal arrangement that could last over changes in staffing moved from a system of custom and usage (a sort of common law as in “the divine right of kings”) into the suggested or codified rules and regulations over the years producing in the present milieu system such a bureaucracies defined by Wikipedia as:

Bureaucracy is a concept in sociology and political science referring to the way that the administrative execution and enforcement of legal rules are socially organized. Four structural concepts are central to any definition of bureaucracy:

- a well-defined division of administrative labor among persons and offices,
- a personnel system with consistent patterns of recruitment and stable linear careers,
- a hierarchy among offices, such that the authority and status are differentially distributed among actors, and
- formal and informal networks that connect organizational actors to one another through flows of information and patterns of cooperation.

Examples of everyday bureaucracies include governments, armed forces, corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), hospitals, courts,

ministries, social clubs, sports leagues, professional associations and academic institutions.²

We include this elaborate definition and allude to the fuller discussion in Wikipedia because looking at an organization's mission first of all must be in the context of organizations.

Then into this system and at the top come many of our ideas that a mission is an important part of moving an organization toward a knowable, even agreed upon, goal. A mission is not the first thing one thinks of when embarking on an enterprise but it is there by implication when folks start discussing what to do next with, "what if we do this..."

Role of Mission

The role of an organizations mission has been the subject of much comment and study. The preamble to the US Constitution is one succinct example of a mission that has had profound effect of the subsequent operation of that organization (i.e., The United State of America). The Wiktionary defines mission statement as:

declaration of the overall goal or purpose of an organization³

Elaborating on that definition, Wikipedia, in its discussion of Mission Statement, suggests that a mission statement:

defines the fundamental purpose of an organization or an enterprise, succinctly describing why it exists and what it does to achieve its Vision. It is sometimes used to set out a 'picture' of the organization in the future. A mission statement provides details of what is done and answers the question: "What do we do?"⁴

In a discussion from 1980, Hatten (1982), makes the case that nonprofit organizations need to be managed in a more "business-like" fashion, in particular, be managed strategically with the sort of evaluative feedback that is found in the for-profit organizations from which nonprofit managers often come. She states:

For efficient management of a not-for-profit organization, as with profit making organizations, goals must be stated with some precision or their attainment can never be properly evaluated. Indeed, even consensus on some fairly obvious strategy can represent a starting point for the strategic management process and enable evaluation for consistency and possible reformulation. Precision of measurement in certain areas may seem artificial, as, for example, measurement of community health. Nevertheless, simply judging performance on one fairly straightforward dimension, as the number of cancer deaths in the community, may improve the service level of the organization by targeting its energies to some specific end, the achievement of which may be monitored.⁵

A mission statement can make a statement but it can also build relationships – the abstract relationship between an organization's vision and its operational activities to achieve that vision as

² From Wikipedia article on Bureaucracy. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bureaucracy>

³ From Wiktionary definition of "mission statement," see http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mission_statement

⁴ From Wikipedia article on Mission Statement, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mission_Statement

⁵ Mary Louise Hatten Strategic Management in Not-For-Profit Organizations *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1982), p. 97

well as the very practical relationship between the organization and its stakeholders. As Weiss & Piderit (1999) suggest:

Another logic connecting mission statements and organizational success rests on the interdependence of an agency with its stakeholders. Mission statements articulate what is distinctive about the organization in ways that clarify the agency's contributions to a larger policy domain and mobilize external stakeholder support by showing how agency effort helps to achieve shared goals⁶

In an elaborate study of mission statements from 300 randomly selected Colleges and Universities, Morphew & Hartley (2006) concluded, in part:

... colleges and universities may be using mission statements not for planning or cultural purposes, but as means of telling important stakeholders outside the institution that "we understand what you want and we're going to deliver it to you." This would be consistent with a lack of aspirational language that these kinds of audiences would either eschew as inappropriate (and inconsistent with the realities of the institution) or unimportant. From this perspective, such use of mission statements represents a maturation on the part of colleges and universities who are getting better at recognizing their patrons and prospective consumers and focusing their attention on what these folks want.

Finally, our study of the elements that make up college and university mission statements suggests that our thinking may need to be updated. Simple assumptions about mission statements (e.g., they are meaningless, self-aggrandizing documents; they are essential to the planning process, etc.) may need to be rethought. While there is evidence that mission statements are used to signal and symbolize, it seems more likely that the subject of college and university mission statements is more complex and that institutions are using these documents to communicate their utility and willingness to serve in terms that are both normative and politically apt.⁷

Evaluation of the Mission

The task of evaluating the mission is somewhat dependant on how well and clearly it is constructed. As Weisbred (1998) suggests in his introduction to a Special Issue of the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* on commercialism in the nonprofit sector:

The scope of nonprofits' missions is generally defined so broadly that it is often unclear whether a particular fund-raising mechanism will or will not be constraining. Such "mission vagueness" has major consequences. It makes difficult the IRS regulatory problem of distinguishing activities that are "mission related" (and, hence, untaxed) and those that are "un-related" (and taxable). It makes it difficult for prospective donors to judge the appropriateness of particular nonprofit activities. And it makes nonprofit accountability difficult as well.⁸

Frumkin & Kim (2001) conclude much the same thing but in a more positive light as they sought to demonstrate that nonprofit funding would be related, at the end of the 20th century, to the efficiency of the organization. Their data did not demonstrate this with the ease which one might expect from a similar study in the for profit sector. They conclude:

⁶ Janet A. Weiss and Sandy Kristin Piderit The Value of Mission Statements in Public Agencies *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*: J-PART, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Apr.,1999), pp. 196-197

⁷ Christopher C. Morphew and Matthew Hartley Mission Statements: A Thematic Analysis of Rhetoric across Institutional Type *The Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (May - Jun., 2006), p. 469

⁸ Burton A. Weisbrod Guest Editor's Introduction: The Nonprofit Mission and Its Financing. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Special Issue: The Commercialism Dilemma of the Nonprofit Sector (Spring, 1998), p. 171

one of the best reasons to give to a charity is that it has communicated a clear and compelling mission with which donors can identify. Far from being an obstacle that must be overcome at any cost, we think the findings reported here could be interpreted as pointing in the other direction. They remind us that donors are still listening to fundraising pleas and that social cause, organizational mission, and personal commitment may all still matter in a sector not yet fully oriented toward efficiency.⁹

Defining Objectives

The operational consequence of an articulated mission are the achievable objectives one can define in order to be working concretely toward the mission defined goals of the organization. As a very well formed example of what can be done in clearly expressing what the organization wants to do in concrete terms, the Vision, Mission and Values of Opera Vivente (www.operavivente.org) is reproduced at the end of the Appendix to illustrate how measurably such statements can be made.

Paths to Measurement

Measurement is not an easy task as many who have conducted empirical studies of the consequences of missions have found. Many of the studies of relevance to this discussion, i.e., nonprofits organizations, have been done with educational institutions (see, for example Doucette, et al., 1985). One of the tasks in this exploration is to find ways to measure once something to measure has been defined.

Examples and Results

The tables below are a beginning of the effort to bring the mission's of various opera companies and, ultimately, other arts organizations under some sort of systematic scrutiny to begin to define whether achieving the stated mission for an Arts organization contributes to the health of that organization.

Local Opera Companies

<i>Company</i>	<i>Component</i>	<i>Accomplishment</i>	<i>State</i>
Berkeley West Edge Opera	Quality, fresh, meaningful productions	Innovative Ring cycle in one evening	good
	Appeal to wide range in audience	High school venue,	good
	Community involvement	Open suggestions for name change	good
City Concert Opera Orchestra	Mobile productions	Various venues (churches) in San Francisco	Not good
Festival	Professional productions, two a year	Board decision not to reduce offerings due to economy	good
Livermore Valley	New venue, same mission	Revitalized and upgraded productions	good
Oakland Opera Theater	New, contemporary works	No production for a year (Nov 2009)	Not good
Opera San Jose	Fully staged, Training young singers	Staying the course, minor economies in production	good

⁹ Peter Frumkin and Mark T. Kim Strategic Positioning and the Financing of Nonprofit Organizations: Is Efficiency Rewarded in the Contributions Marketplace? *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (May - Jun., 2001), p. 274

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<i>Company</i>	<i>Component</i>	<i>Accomplishment</i>	<i>State</i>
Pocket Opera	New venue, same mission	New season will begin in 2011	???
SF Lyric Opera	Failed to adopt new mission	Costly production in new venue; suspended operation at end of 2009	Not good
Townsend Opera	New venue, music as mission	Upgraded productions, professional staff, community outreach	good
Urban Opera	Presented in unexpected locations	Hour long versions in outdoor plaza, local church	fair
West Bay Opera	Staged production of familiar and adventurous	Mixture if standards and unique; heightened community outreach	good

One of the signs of success is survival. Three of the companies in the list above are not mounting productions this year. On the other hand, several of the companies, forced by various circumstances to perform in a new, often larger, venues have maintained their focus on their missions and are, at this point, reinvigorated.

National Opera Companies

<i>Company</i>	<i>Component</i>	<i>Accomplishment</i>	<i>State</i>
Metropolitan Opera	Continue traditional mission	Continue to operate in traditional manner	good
	Met at the Movies	Apparently successful and expanding effort	good
Opera Colorado	Continue traditional mission	Successful staging of traditional and newer works	good
Houston Grand Opera	Continue traditional mission	Successful balance between standard works and modern offerings	good
San Francisco Opera	Continued mission	Shortened season, balanced new works/ productions with standard works	good
Washington National Opera	Ambitious implementation of mission	Abortive mounting of Wagner’s Ring and other problems causing reassessment of program	fair
New York City Opera	Revised mission to accommodate new general director	General director was replaced, mission reverted, adjustments made to reduce costs	fair

The major national companies have adjusted without abandoning the missions that got them to be the world-class organizations they became over their years of operation. Two of the companies listed reached, perhaps, a little too far from their core experience and have not been as easily able to adjust to the changed economic clients as the others. One of the next questions to ask is, "Where is the tipping point?"

Final Remarks

We will close our discussion with recommendation on how to keep an evolving mission before the arts organization as it moves toward a successful future. At this point in this on-going study, a conclusion must be tentative but with that reservation, it seems clear that a rudder constructed from a mission and all that it implied is better than no rudder at all.

Returning to a study cited earlier Weiss & Piderit (1999) conclude from their study of the value of mission statements:

our results suggest that focus on certain content themes and talk that is activist in orientation may be consequential. Such talk clarifies for managers themselves what they hope to achieve. Talking

in a highly public way (as one does in a mission statement) can lead to pressure from a variety of quarters on managers and staff to connect their actions with the mission. Talking the talk may be essential for principals (or other managers), teachers (or other staff), and parents (or other constituents) to commit themselves to the hard work of walking the talk.

In this sense, mission statements create opportunities to accelerate performance. Not all managers, nor all organizations, are prepared to take advantage of such opportunities. But if they do, if they learn to walk the talk, then the talk itself will have set them on the path to better results.¹⁰

While we are gaining ground on a similar conclusion from this effort with small opera companies local to the San Francisco Bay Area and in extending this effort to larger companies and those at other locations, we are not quite there yet although the indications are that Opera companies and Arts organizations are well served by making their missions public, involving their stakeholders (staff, talent, patrons, contributors and communities) in the development of that mission.

In the end, the survival of the arts will be the measure of how that survival came to be. And it may not be for us to know that end for which we dream. The ancient Greek Theater had to wait over 1500 years to be reborn; Handel's Operas gathered dust in the Kings Library for over 150 years before their rediscovery.

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¹⁰ Weiss & Piderit, *op. cit.* p221

Appendix

The following Mission Statements have been gathered from the explicit expression of a mission statements on the organizations web site or by implication from mission-like statements by the organization. (A similar list of mission statements was developed for Lorton (2007)¹¹. Statements that are changed from that time are marked "*" with the change highlighted in the discussion in the main body of this paper.)

Berkeley [West Edge] Opera (berkeleyopera.org)

*This year, Berkley Opera moved to another and new venue in a state of the art theater – the El Cerrito Performing Arts Theater prompting a change in name adding "West Edge" to their title. Their mission remains the same:

Berkeley Opera's mission is to present opera as lively, compelling musical theater, fusing music and drama to delight, move, and challenge our audiences, while remaining accessible, affordable and engaging. To this end, its objectives include

- providing quality performances that respect the unique spirit of each work while presenting it in a way that is fresh and meaningful to our audiences
- appealing to a wide audience of all ages, ranging from seasoned opera lovers to those experiencing opera for the first time
- promoting community involvement through education, outreach, and opportunities to participate in a variety of ways, and
- providing the opportunity for emerging talent to gain experience and exposure.

City Concert Opera Orchestra (www.cityconcertopera.com)*

City Concert Opera Orchestra has a commitment to bring little known, often lost, works to the public in a variety of easily accessed venues with a minimum of the usual trappings of an Opera production. Their web site stated (it is currently suspended):

City Concert Opera Orchestra is the San Francisco Bay Area's professional orchestra dedicated to presenting rarely-heard opera scores to the public in concert presentations. Since our inception in 2002, we has developed a reputation for high quality work, fiscal economy, and artistic integrity.

By presenting opera in concert format, we to expand the operatic repertoire. Without expensive stage crews, costumes, crews, and extended rehearsal periods, CCOO can take a flexible approach to presentation and programming. Quality soloists are unwilling to memorize roles they will never have a chance to perform again. This needlessly deprives opera lovers of the opportunity to hear a full range of operatic possibilities. We have also prepared a number of new editions of hard-to-obtain pieces.

We present some of the highest quality vocalists available, and our work furthers the careers of emerging local talent. Former company singers have won competitions ... All vocalists live locally.

Without the technical requirements of stage scenery and lighting, CCOO's productions are mobile. Many individuals, especially seniors, are unable or unwilling to travel to San Francisco to hear high quality professional opera, and regional opera companies usually do not have the resources to present works without reducing or eliminating the orchestration.

¹¹ Lorton, P. Jr. What Makes Opera Thrive: Learning From Evaluation in the Performing Arts. *AEA Annual Conference*, Baltimore, MD, Nov 2007

Festival Opera (www.festivalopera.com)

Based in a fairly new performing arts center, the suburban Festival opera company has made well-staged opera available to a community separated by bridges and tunnels from the San Francisco venues. It has prospered from this location and from its expressed purpose:

Now in its second decade, Festival Opera is committed to bringing professional opera productions at affordable prices to residents of San Francisco's thriving East Bay communities. The third-largest opera company in the Bay Area, Festival Opera is a showcase for talented young artists.

Livermore Valley Opera (www.livermorevalleyopera.com)

*Livermore Valley Opera has also moved into the new Bankhead Theater in Livermore California – a state of the art facility in a nicely redeveloped part of Livermore. Their website mission remains unchanged:

Livermore Valley Opera (LVO) combines the talents and expertise of professional music, stage and chorus directors, principal singers, musicians, and designers with the dedication and practical abilities of a volunteer board, adult chorus, stage crew, props master, stitchers, and set builders.

Each spring and fall, LVO presents a locally produced, fully-staged opera with orchestra in the renovated and acoustically sound Livermore Valley Performing Arts Center.

Additionally, LVO presents special concerts, events and fund-raisers such as "Dinner and ..." in the winter and "Opera in the Vineyard" in the summer.

Located in the Tri-Valley area about 60 miles east of San Francisco, LVO promotes local talent and attracts outstanding Bay Area singers, directors and conductors.

Oakland Opera Theater (www.oaklandopera.org)

Oakland Opera Theater, having begun as "Underworld Opera Company and still filling forms in that name, does unique 20th and 21st century works staged in a small venue so that the intimacy of the theater can magnify the impact of the Opera's statement. From their web site:

The Oakland Opera Theater is a group of artists who produce newly created operatic works. We address issues relevant to modern urban life. We highlight performers and artists of color. We use modern digital technology to reach beyond the audience seated in the theater. We produce fully staged productions geared to the pace of the 21st century. We seek to make opera more accessible to all ages and cultures and to represent Oakland with a dynamic arts organization that embodies the unique and vital spirit of our local community.

Opera San Jose (www.operasj.org)

Opera San Jose is Irene Dalis' dream and she has worked very hard for more than a quarter of a century to make it a contributing, respectable presence in the area. It is both and makes a unique contribution.

From their web site:

Opera San José is a professional, regional opera company that is unique in the United States. Maintaining a resident company of principal artists, this company specializes in showcasing the finest young professional singers in the nation. Featuring fresh, new talents in the first years of their careers, Opera San José's performances are always dramatically stimulating and vocally accomplished.

In addition to mainstage performances, Opera San José maintains extensive educational programs in schools and in the community at large, and offers Previews lectures and Introduction to Opera talks for all mainstage productions.

Pocket Opera (www.pocketopera.org)

Founded in 1977 by Donald Pippin, the driving force of the company for the past 30 years, the Pocket Opera works very hard on bringing quality, if abbreviated, experience of Opera to all with Pippin's fine English translations of most work and a good dose of wit and humor, the concert staged productions entertain, inform and educate past, present and future lovers of the art form. For the upcoming season, Pocket Opera will move to a different venue in San Francisco and in Berkeley.

From the Company's web site:

Pocket Opera presents professional performances of operatic works in intimate, intelligible productions at affordable prices.

Donald Pippin's approach to opera is to tell the story in the clearest manner possible. He once said that there is "a whole category of operas where, if you don't know the story on the way to the theatre, you won't know it on the way home, either." With Pocket Opera presentations it is really possible to know the plot of the opera on the way home. Pippin brings the story to life via his nationally recognized English versions of opera libretti, in which he translates the spirit of the work rather than word by word, with complete fidelity to the composer's musical intentions.

Pocket Opera is a theatre of the mind and of the heart. Productions are staged with minimal costuming and without sets, using only the few practical props (a bench, a desk, a door, ...) that are essential to convey the story. A few operas, for which staging would add little or nothing to the interpretation of the story, are performed concert style. Through the use of Pippin's singable translations and narration, through accomplished vocalists and small chamber orchestra, Pocket Opera presents the essence of opera -- affordable, accessible opera of the highest musicality for contemporary audiences.

Professionally trained singers perform for Pocket Opera. Pocket Opera alumni may be found in opera houses around the world.

San Francisco Lyric Opera (www.sflyricopera.org)

The San Francisco Lyric opera was started by a group of members of the San Francisco opera's chorus who wanted to get the kind of experience that would move them up the opera ladder from the chorus to solo roles. In 2001 it was placed on a more regular footing and recast to operate as a continuing enterprise ought. At that time the following mission was established:

The Lyric Opera is dedicated to:

- Performance of classical opera at prices that more people can afford.
- Inspiring today's younger generation to become tomorrow's opera patron.

- Providing a venue for young singers to perform.
- Outreach to children.

At every performance, 10% of seats are available, free of charge, to children from the San Francisco Unified School District. All children under 12 are admitted free. Each November performances are held in public schools.

San Francisco Opera (sfopera.com)

The brief mission for this \$60 million operation does befit the magnitude of the enterprise:

To be the most exciting force in the opera world

Our Mission

- To present opera performances of the highest international quality available to the widest possible audiences.
- To perpetuate and enrich the operatic art form.
- To be creative and innovative in all aspects of opera.
- To take a leadership role in training, arts education and audience development

This Mission Demands

- A diversified, highly committed, qualified Board of Directors working in partnership with an efficient and effective top quality management team and staff.
- Healthy financial performance with a balanced budget and adequate endowment.
- Involvement with our community.
- An image that reflects our artistic quality.

Townsend Opera Players (www.townsendoperaplayers.com)

From the TOPS mission statement:

Music is a universal language. Across cultures and centuries music has always been a central part of the human experience. Music nourishes the soul. At Townsend Opera Players, our mission is to feed the soul.

*Urban Opera (www.urbanopera.org)

Urban Opera is a new San Francisco-based opera company focused on telling the beautiful, yet often improbable, stories of the classic operas in a compelling way for a modern audience.

Urban Opera sets these tales of passion, betrayal, love and loss in unexpected locations in the City with minimal sets and emerging, talented singers who aren't afraid to take risks -- this is not your grandparents' opera

West Bay Opera (www.wbopera.org)

West Bay Opera has enjoyed the second longest existence of any of these companies, younger only than the San Francisco Opera. From the web description:

Under the direction of Maria Holt, David Sloss, and now current General Director José

Luis Moscovich, West Bay Opera has strengthened its commitment to the mission first articulated by Henry Holt:

To offer audiences in the San Francisco Bay Area operatic productions of the highest quality while providing for the professional growth of emerging artists, as well as experienced directors, designers, and other artistic personnel, and maintaining the traditions of community participation and education

The Season

Performing both the familiar and the adventurous, West Bay Opera seeks to please and challenge singers and audiences with three productions per season, one each in October, February, and May. The repertoire includes standard popular works, lesser-known operas and operettas, and occasionally operas by modern composers. Some of West Bay Opera's greatest successes result from undertaking formidable artistic challenges. Past accomplishments include Bellini's *Norma*, Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* in the original Russian, and Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer*. The principal consideration is always to give talented young opera singers an opportunity to perform challenging roles and, in turn, to give audiences the pleasure of hearing these singers on their way to fame.

All productions include projected supertitles in English.

National Opera Companies

The following opera companies represent some of the key organizations and examples on the broader stage than the target area of concern and their missions are also examined to highlight telling parallels and differences.

Metropolitan Opera

The Metropolitan Opera is a vibrant home for the most creative and talented artists, including singers, conductors, composers, orchestra musicians, stage directors, designers, visual artists, choreographers, and dancers from around the world. Known as the venue for the world's greatest voices, the Met has been under the musical direction of James Levine since 1976. Levine is credited with having created one of opera's finest orchestras and choruses. In the summer of 2006, Peter Gelb became the Met's 16th general manager. Under the leadership of Gelb and Levine, the Met is elevating the company's theatrical standards by significantly increasing the number of new productions, staged by the most imaginative directors working in theater and opera. The company is also securing increased commitments from the world's greatest singers. The Met has launched a series of initiatives to broaden its audience internationally; efforts have ranged from transmitting operas live in high definition to movie theaters around the world to hosting free Open Houses for the general public. To revitalize the company's repertoire, the Met has pledged to present modern masterpieces alongside the classic repertoire.

The Metropolitan Opera was founded in 1883. The first Metropolitan Opera House was built on Broadway and 39th Street by a group of wealthy businessmen who wanted their own opera house. In the company's early years, the management changed course several times, first performing everything in Italian (even *Carmen* and *Lohengrin*), then everything in German (even *Aida* and *Faust*), before finally settling into a policy of performing most works in their original language, with some notable exceptions.

Opera Colorado

Opera Colorado enriches the quality of life through the presentation of opera performances that inspire our audience, and serves the community through education and cultural programs.

Houston Opera

VISION

An opera company, which is recognized nationally and internationally for:

- World-beating artistic excellence and innovation
- Breaking down social, ethnic and economic barriers
- A motivated and efficient company of people
- Financial stability and sustainability

and which enjoys dynamic, proactive and deepening relationships with the stakeholders, constituencies and communities which it serves.

MISSION - Why we exist

Houston Grand Opera exists to contribute to the cultural enrichment of the city of Houston and the nation by:

- Producing and performing world-class opera
- Creating a diverse, innovative and balanced program of performances, events, community and education projects which reaches the widest possible public

Washington National Opera

Washington National Opera makes its home in the nation's capital and in the beautiful John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. With this inspirational backdrop, in each new season Washington National Opera strives to present the best that the art form has to offer. WNO has had innumerable artistic highlights, including world premieres, commissions of new works, new productions, and international tours.

Washington National Opera reaches audiences inside and outside the opera house. WNO productions have been heard around the world through radio and television broadcasts on NPR, XM Satellite Radio, and PBS. The simulcast, a live broadcast of an opera from the Kennedy Center, has been attended by more than 125,000 people, including college students around the country for a simulcast of *La Bohème* in 2007.

As part of WNO's commitment to not only presenting great opera but also nurturing the future of the art form, **WNO's Center for Education and Training**—which includes the award-winning Education and Community Programs, the **Plácido Domingo Intern/Apprentice Program**, and the celebrated **Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program**—seeks to broaden the public's awareness and understanding of opera, and cultivate the next generation of opera stars and supporters of the arts. In 2003 WNO launched *Generation O*, a program for patrons age 18 to 35, which makes WNO accessible to young opera lovers and new opera listeners through specially-priced tickets, special events, and educational opportunities.

In each new endeavor that the company undertakes, Washington National Opera strives to raise artistic standards and provide new and better opera to the nation's capital.

Baltimore Concert Opera

Baltimore Concert Opera presents opera in a format that highlights the human voice. By removing the artifice that separates the audience from the performers, BCO creates an experience that is intimate and affordable, that captures the core essence of opera, and that is unlike the overly visual trend of the industry as a whole. In this way, BCO endeavors to create new fans of the art form while giving existing fans an entirely new experience.

We hope that you join us at the breathtaking Garrett Jacobs Mansion, our "home stage." Our concerts feature the highest quality local and imported vocal talent, and are not to be missed. We hope very much to gain YOU as an audience member, and as an active participant in the growth of this company.

Baltimore Opera Theatre (baltimoreoperatheatre.net)

Baltimore Opera Theatre is a new company founded by international opera impresario Giorgio Lalov and former opera singer and Baltimore native, Jenny Kelly. The couple's aesthetic view of the arts is grounded in the philosophy that connecting with an audience is not based on huge budgets and grandiosity, but on artists and audience having a meaningful exchange that enriches their lives.

The company will engage local talent in comprimario roles and performing arts school students from the Baltimore area will participate as extras. The orchestra for the company will be musicians of Sofia Symphony Orchestra in combination with local Baltimore area musicians under the baton of Markam Thakar. Chorus master for the operas will be Jo-Anne Herrera who will assemble an outstanding professional chorus of European and American singers.

New York City Opera (www.nycopera.com)

Since its founding in 1943, New York City Opera has been recognized as one of America's preeminent cultural institutions, celebrated for its adventurous programming and innovative, risk-taking production style. The company's wide-ranging repertory of 273 works spans five centuries of music and includes 29 world premieres and 61 American and/or New York premieres of such notable works as Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shostakovich's *Katerina Ismailova*, Busoni's *Doktor Faust*, Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* and *The Flaming Angel*, Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten*, Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*, and Glass' *Akhmaten*. The company has been a leading showcase for young artists, helping to launch the careers of more than 3,000 singers ... In 1983 City Opera made operatic history when it became the first American company to use supertitles, an innovation that has revolutionized the way opera is produced and appreciated worldwide.

In February 2009, George Steel, former Executive Director of Miller Theatre at Columbia University, began his tenure as the company's new General Manager and Artistic Director. Building on the company's core mission of artistic excellence and accessibility, Mr. Steel's plans include broadening the company's adventurous approach to repertory, supporting the careers of promising young singers, and continuing to develop the company's acclaimed education and outreach programs.



VISION

A community where all people regardless of age, economic situation, ethnicity, or educational background will have an exposure to opera and feel welcome at and enriched by accessible operatic performances. Talented individuals of all races and economic status will have the opportunity to be educated in the operatic art and have the venue to make a viable living in the performance of opera. Fiscally responsible opera companies will have the financial stability to educate all ages in the value and joy of opera and provide the performance venue and training opportunities for professionals and students of the art.

MISSION

We accomplish our vision by:

- Producing innovative and unusual productions.
- Utilizing intimate performance space to create a bond between the audience and performers.
- Performing exclusively in English.
- A commitment to casting auditioned local singers and orchestral members and utilizing local talent in scenic, lighting, costume and makeup design.
- Keeping ticket prices affordable without compromising the quality of productions.
- Providing educational opportunities via pre-performance discussions and affordable master classes for all interested citizens and providing a “behind the scenes” look through our General Director’s blog.
- Leading collaborative efforts between local arts educational institutions and non-profit arts organizations (such as Peabody Institute, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore School for the Arts, Handel Choir, etc.) to provide opportunities for professional performance experience.
- Providing community outreach through local events such as Artscape, and master classes offered at schools.
- Providing ample volunteer opportunities for “non-performers” who are interested in operatic art.
- Being prudent stewards of the donor funds with which we are entrusted and operating with fiscal responsibility.

VALUES

The Board of Trustees and Management fulfill the mission operating under a strict code of ethics including the annual completion of a conflict of interest statement. We are committed to fundraising in an ethical manner and in a manner which never compromises the company’s artistic vision. We are committed to diversity in casting and staffing so that the diverse audience we seek to attract will see itself reflected back at our performances. We are committed to a totally transparent financial reporting system and the use of donor funds and grants for the strict purpose of their donation. We are committed to recruiting a diverse and qualified Board of Directors to continue good governance practices and to seek innovative and inclusive initiatives to accomplish our vision.