

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to ask the Esther B. Kahn Charitable Foundation for a grant of \$14,223 to support the launch of a ground-breaking project, Opera Research Online at Boston University. Of the total cost of the project \$24,223² we have received a grant of \$10,000 from the Boston University Humanities Foundation, and applications to the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Kahn Foundation are pending.

Opera Research Online, a new initiative based at Boston University, aims to broaden and educate the audience for opera. For its debut project, it is creating an interactive website focusing on Giacomo Puccini's "American" opera *The Girl of the Golden West (La Fanciulla del West)* based on the play by American playwright David Belasco. The launch of this site will coincide with the centennial of the opera's premiere (December 1910), and a centennial performance at the Metropolitan Opera on December 10, 2010. The site will then continue indefinitely as a vehicle to inform and stimulate dialogue among scholars, educators, students, and the general public. Using previously unknown archival material, interactive features, a virtual museum, iconography, video interviews, video streaming, and links to other sites, the website will be designed to inform and stimulate dialogue among scholars, educators, students, and the general public. In addition, Boston University will have an exhibition in early December 2010 of related materials from the University's Howard Gottlieb Archival Research Center and host a symposium of specialists and scholars, such as Deborah Burton (Boston University), Carolyn Guzski (Buffalo State University), Harvey Sachs (Curtis Institute), Simonetta Puccini (the composer's granddaughter) and Walfredo Toscanini (the conductor's grandson). These events will be videotaped, and added to the website. Companion Facebook and Twitter sites will be created to complement the site, and to increase its portability and exposure, content will be made available on different media and networks, such as DVDs and YouTube.

The Girl of the Golden West offers an especially rich opportunity for a multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary humanistic discussion. Set in the multicultural society of the California Gold Rush in the 1840's, the work simultaneously challenges and propagates the American myth of the cowboy and the West. For instance, the opera's characters value and respect an independent white woman who comes to the rescue of her Latino man, but the production also represents only a portion of the peoples who participated in the Gold Rush, and racial stereotypes, particularly of Native Americans, have not been banished from the work. Exploration of the opera's creation will be greatly enhanced by the inclusion of previously unavailable source and archival material. The project's team enjoys strong connections with the descendants of the opera's creators: Simonetta Puccini, Walfredo Toscanini and Cheryl Green (a descendent of the playwright Belasco). They, the archivists at the Metropolitan Opera of New York and the Lehman family archive, have generously supplied material for the site.

This project and website breaks new ground. Opera companies typically have individual sites that deal with their own productions and usually contain some interactive educational features. Aria Database gives information on arias which is useful for performers. Opera Glass, of Stanford University, provides a menu of information for researchers, such as libretti, source texts, plot synopses, performance histories, creators of roles, and discographies. None of the existing sites, however, offers the combination of in-depth

scholarship, opportunity for discussion, or potential appeal to the general public that we plan. The Internet is the ideal platform for studying opera, since it can display text, images, video and sound – all elements of the artform. Our website will serve as a repository for archival material, be an interactive tool for learning, provide recordings interviews and events, and more, while gathering it all in one easy-to-access location.

In the past, opera audiences have tended to be more economically privileged city-dwellers. While that situation has been steadily changing--opera has been televised with subtitles, and regional opera companies are functioning around the United States--very often the notion of opera has retained an air of selectivity. Opera Research Online I: Puccini's *Girl of the Golden West* is intended to widen the audience for opera through the use of the Internet, Facebook and Twitter, as well as aiding scholars of the humanities, educators, students, and established opera lovers. In addition, Opera Research Online's focus on *The Girl of the Golden West* commemorates the moment one hundred years ago when the United States gained an international reputation in the world of classical music.

Expenses:

Symposium at Boston University: travel and hotel costs: \$5379

Exhibition costs at Boston University: \$500

Videotaping service for four interviews +symposium: \$3500

Honoraria to interviewees: \$4000

Website development, design and hosting \$10,144

Permissions for web publication: \$700

Indirect costs: ?

Total: \$24,223?

Funds already received: \$10,000

Staff:

Deborah Burton, an assistant professor at Boston University, is a specialist in the operas of Puccini and head of the project. She is author of the forthcoming *Recondite Harmony: The Music of Puccini*, co-editor of and contributor to the interdisciplinary *Tosca's Prism* (Northeastern University Press, 2004) and "The Real Scarpia: historical sources for *Tosca*" (*Opera Quarterly*, 1994), and many other articles and program notes on opera. She is able to supply musicological expertise, access to archival materials, English translations, and editorial skills.

Other contributors to the website include Allan Atlas (professor at the City University of New York Graduate Center and author of many articles on Puccini and *The Girl of the Golden West*), Rosalind Gray Davis and Annie Randall (co-authors of *Puccini and the Girl: History and Reception of the Girl of the Golden West*, University of Chicago Press, 2005), Carolyn Guzski, a scholar specializing in opera in the musical scene in the New York City of the early 20th Century, and professor at Buffalo State University) and Harvey Sachs (on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, author of eight books including three volumes on Arturo Toscanini and, as co-author, the memoirs of Plácido Domingo and Sir Georg Solti). His most recent published volume is *The Letters of Arturo Toscanini* (Knopf, 2002), which he compiled, translated, and edited. We will also have videos of internationally

known opera singers Sherrill Milnes, Placido Domingo and Barbara Daniels. The website would be designed and maintained by Malcolm Johnstone of Learning Objects, LLC, a company that has done extensive work for Boston University's Online Programs.