

May 28, 2010

Jeffrey D. Hutchins
Mattina R. Proctor Foundation
c/o Broude & Hochberg, LLP
75 Federal St., Ste. 1300
Boston, MA 02110-1921

Dear Mr. Hutchins,

I am writing to ask the Proctor Foundation for a grant of \$5,000 to support the launch of a ground-breaking project, Opera Research Online at Boston University.

The audience for opera tends to be urban, older and economically privileged. A new Boston University School of Music initiative, Opera Research Online, aims to inform and broaden this audience through the innovative use of digital media, and is seeking support for its debut project: a pioneering, interactive website focusing on Giacomo Puccini's opera, *The Girl of the Golden West* (La Fanciulla del West), based on the play by American playwright David Belasco. The work's historical setting, and challenges to cultural stereotypes offer an exceptional opportunity for a multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary discussion. The website will aid scholars, educate students, and engage the newest generation of viewers.

In addition, Boston University will have an exhibition in early December 2010 of related materials from the University's Howard Gotlieb 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 composer'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 especially rich opportunities for cross-disciplinary 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.

The launch of this site will coincide with the Metropolitan Opera's centennial performance of the opera's premiere (December 1910), commemorating the moment one hundred years ago when the Metropolitan Opera, and by extension the United States, gained an international reputation in the musical world. The Metropolitan Opera's main and educational sites will link to the *Fanciulla* site, which will then continue indefinitely as a vehicle to inform and stimulate dialogue among scholars, educators, students, and the general public.

This project and website break 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 which we plan.

The project will be led by Deborah Burton, an Assistant Professor of Music at Boston University's College of Fine Arts and specialist in the operas of Puccini. She is author of the many works on opera, including the forthcoming *Recondite Harmony: The Music of Puccini*. Dr. Sandra Nicolucci, an award-winning expert in music education and Associate Professor at Boston University, will advise the project on how best to reach public school audiences. Boston University Professor, Nina Silber, a leading scholar of 19th-century United States history, will serve as humanities advisor to the project, and Malcolm Johnstone, the founder of Learning Objects, LLC, an award-winning developer of interactive media for online learning, will be the head of the media staff creating the website.

The website will launch in December 2010, but some archival material, video interviews and links are already in place. They can be seen at the demo site: <http://www.fanciulla100.org/test.html>. The exhibition and symposium at Boston University will also take place in early December 2010. Additional video interviews are scheduled for summer 2010, and permissions for archival museum materials will also be continued during that time.

The design and production costs of this project will be \$72,068. Boston University is contributing \$10,000, \$4,000 has been donated by individuals, and we have requests for more than \$65,000 pending with various institutional donors in addition to the Mattina R. Proctor Foundation.

I believe this project fits the Foundation's mission particularly well, combining its support for opera and higher education. A donation of \$5,000 from the Mattina R.

Proctor Foundation would play a key role in helping us create both a lasting legacy to a landmark production and an innovative project to educate and broaden opera's audience. Thank you for your consideration of our application.

Sincerely,

Deborah Burton