

A Guide to the Records of the Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia, 1964-2011

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1964-2011



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Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

RG 191

Language

English

Creator

Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia

Extent

7 boxes.

Repository

Arlington Public Library, Center for Local History

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Gift of OTNV member Jean Shirhall in March 2012.

Preferred Citation

Records of the Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia, Collection # RG 191, Arlington Public Library, Center for Local History

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Researchers interested in arts groups in Arlington would be interested in [RG 166, Records of Signature Theatre](#), and [RG 54, Arlington Symphony Records](#).

Historical Information

The Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia (OTNV) began as the Arlington Music Theatre in 1961. In 1967, the group was formally incorporated "for the purpose of producing professional but accessible opera, normally in English." OTNV would produce two to three operas per season, and in the 1980s became more active in educating the public about opera, providing opera talks and producing smaller versions of their seasonal shows at Lubber Run amphitheater during the summer months. Every year, OTNV would produce a "children's opera," either an opera geared specifically towards children or an opera that was light, fun, and child-appropriate. These productions were advertised to public schools and local scouting groups, as well as to the general public. OTNV also produced new operas written originally in English by local composers.

Starting July 1, 2010, OTNV became the Aurora Opera Theatre with the same mission; the name change was to revitalize the group, which was in decline due to lower ticket sales and reduced support from individual and government sponsors. Aurora Opera Theatre disbanded in July 2011. However, opera is still alive in Northern Virginia through Opera Nova. Opera Nova is supported by the Opera Guild of Northern Virginia, which grew out of OTNV as a fundraising and support arm in 1991. Opera Nova carries out OTNV's original mission to bring opera to all people, bridging age, race, and income.

Scope and Content

RG 191 contains the records of the Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia, and is 3.1 linear feet. The collection ranges from 1963 to 2011, and the bulk of the material dates 1980-2008. There is an incomplete run of board minutes and annual reports, along with scattered administrative records, found in *Series 1*. The majority of the materials in this collection are linked to individual productions by the theatre, which is *Series 2, Production Materials*. This series holds programs, publicity, reviews, correspondence, contracts, and photographs, to give a fuller picture of the creation, publicity, and response to productions included in this series.

Series 3, Scrapbooks, hold clippings (both reviews and publicity), ephemera such as tickets and programs, flyers for productions and OTNV fundraisers, and correspondence to display an entire season of OTNV activities, as opposed to breaking materials up into particular productions like in *Series 2*. *Series 4, Printed Materials*, contain material meant to be seen and used by the public, including programs (independent of Series 2 materials), flyers, and mailers. There is a short run of the OTNV's newsletter, "Andante." Series 4 contains the collection's only material on the Aurora Opera Theatre and has two folders of material on the Arlington Cultural Council, also known as the Arlington Arts Council and the Arlington Arts Affiliate Council. This group had representatives from OTNV and other Arlington arts groups, and worked for better support from the County (specifically the Office of Cultural Affairs) and for the joint program "A Gift of the Arts." These folders contain meeting minutes and correspondence with Arlington County officials.

Photographs are found throughout *Series 2*, and are usually production stills. Photographs in *Series 3* are usually publicity stills of singers featured in OTNV performances. In *Series 4*, there are color printouts of thumbnails of digital photographs, again production stills. However, original digital files were not donated, so these printed thumbnails are the only version of these images in this collection.

Index Terms

Subjects:

Theaters -- Virginia
Arlington (Va.)
Arlington County (Va.)

Arrangement

RG 191 is divided into four series. *Series 2 and 3, Production Materials and Scrapbooks*, were already grouped together by the donor by type of material and then organized chronologically by the archivist. *Series 1 and 4, Administrative Material and Printed Material*, were originally in folders, and the archivist separated those folders by type of material. Folder titles in quotes ["] were originally given by the donor; folder titles without quotes were created by the archivist. Folder titles with an asterisk at the end [*] denotes files with photographs included. A separate list of photographs has been created.

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