

# **Minnesota Opera Collection**

## **M/A 2008.01.01-03**

**Finding aid prepared by Finding aid prepared by Ian Stade**

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library

May 2008

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library
<b>Creator</b>	Center Opera of Minnesota.
<b>Creator</b>	Minnesota Opera.
<b>Title</b>	Minnesota Opera Collection
<b>Date</b>	1963-2000
<b>Extent</b>	1.5 Linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English

## History

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The Center Opera Company was founded in 1963 when the Walker Art Center Commissioned an opera for its performing arts program. In its early years the opera company was known for its alternative and progressive programming. The company avoided star singers, instead focusing on singer-actors. They were admired for commissioning new works and their policy of presenting "opera without elephants." H. Wesley Balk was with the company from 1965-1984 and was known for his radical interpretations of opera classics. One memorable performance was Donizetti's "Lucia di Lammermoor" in which Balk placed heroine Lucia in a cage. The audience's response was to boo, Balk responded to the crew backstage, "I know they're awake!"

The company became the Minnesota Opera in 1973. Locations of early productions included the Guthrie Theater, O'Shaughnessy Auditorium, Hennepin Methodist Church and the Prom Ballroom. In 1975 the Minnesota Opera merged with the St. Paul Opera and through the 1980s began to put on more traditional productions.

Stuck between its earlier identity as an avant-garde company and its embrace of more traditional operas, the company began a turnaround in 1986 when Kevin Smith was named general director. Smith made Dale Johnson the director of artistic planning. Johnson had an ear for new young singers and the quality and consistency of productions climbed during Smith's tenure. The dramatically intense 1990 production of "Carmen" was the breakthrough production of the new era. In 1987 there were 1,200 subscribers to the opera, by 1997 there were 6,600.

In 1985 the Minnesota Opera became a founding tenant of the Ordway Theater in St. Paul. The company continues to have a presence in Minneapolis at the Minnesota Opera Center, located at 620 North First Street in the Warehouse District of Minneapolis.

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## Description of Collection

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Four boxes of materials from 1963 to 2000. Included is a list of the first 25 years of productions with locations and dates. A nearly complete collection of programs from the early years to the 1980s and some clipped reviews are housed in box 1B. Included in the collection is some Board of Directors Materials donated by Barbara Flanagan including Board handbooks.

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## Administrative Information

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## **Publication Information**

James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library May 2008

## **Revision Description**

Collection was divided into two series: I. Center Opera Company, II. Minnesota Opera Company. August 2013

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **Corporate Name(s)**

- Center Opera of Minnesota.
- Minnesota Opera.

### **Subject(s)**

- Opera companies -- Minnesota.

## Center Opera Company

## Collection Inventory

<b>Center Opera Company 1964-1972</b>		
	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Newspaper Clippings 1964-1972	1	1
Mailings	1	2
History	1	3
Opera News	1	4
Opera Log 3, 4, 5 1966-1967	1	5
Opera Log 5, 6 1969-1970	1	6
Season Brochures 1964-1972	1	7
Magazine of the Temple University Music Festival and Institute 1971	1	8
Programs 1963-1969	1B	1
Programs 1970-1972	1B	2

## Minnesota Opera Company

<b>Minnesota Opera Company 1973-2003</b>		
	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Programs 1973	1B	3
Programs 1973-1974	1B	4
Programs 1974-1975	1B	5
Programs 1975-1976	1B	6
Programs 1976-1977	1B	7
Programs 1977-1978	1B	8
Programs 1978-1979	1B	9
Programs 1979-1980	1B	10
Programs 1980-1981	1B	11
Programs 1981-1982	1B	12
Programs 1982-1983	1B	13
Programs 1983-1984	1B	14

## Minnesota Opera Company

Programs 1987-1989	1B	15
Programs 1991-1995	1B	16
Programs 1996-2000	1B	17
Newspaper Clippings 1973-1980	2	1
Newspaper Clippings 1980-2000	2	2
Season Brochures 1973-1987	2	3
Season Brochures 1991-1995	2	4
Season Brochures 1996-2005	2	5
Brochures, Mailings, Newsletters 1975-2003	2	6
Benefit, Gala invitations 1976-1979, 1983, 1988, 1992, 1998	2	7
Press Releases 1975-1976	3	1
Board of Directors 1990-1992	3	2
Board of Directors 1992-1993	3	3
Musicians Union 1993	3	4



## Posters

Financial Report 1992	3	5
Community Relations Committee 1993-1994	3	6
Board Handbook 1992-1993	3	7
Board Handbook 1994	3	8
	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Data DVD of Program Images 1964-1975	3	9
<b>Posters Undated, 1976-1991</b>		<b>Oversize Posters</b>
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>		
14 posters		