



## Opera North, Inc. Engages Underserved Communities

ONI's Opera in the Schools program included performances at: Girard College, Wagner Middle School and Stetson Middle School.

As part of a new strategy ONI has developed a partnership with the Philadelphia Education Fund and its *Arts Zone* project. This partnership has great potential for future Opera in the Schools programming.

The Education Fund invited ONI to present its Opera in the Schools program to two of the Fund's key *Arts Zone* school participants Stetson and Wagner Middle Schools. Both performances were viewed as a great success by the *Arts Zone* coordinators prompting the following quote from the Education Fund coordinator "*The assembly was one of the best I've seen. A true exemplar in the field on many levels.*"

ONI performing artists include prominent opera vocalists, jazz and classical instrumentalists, local university faculty and students.

## THE ONI MISSION

*Our mission is to impact the quality of life and developmental experiences of underserved communities having little or no exposure to the arts; to produce stimulating and high-quality artistic experiences for Opera North, Inc audiences; to create performance opportunities for talented yet underexposed African-American artists and to highlight the many contributions of African-Americans to the operatic genre.*

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*The Boutique Opera Company*

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## ONI 2012 Collaborative Productions

In March 2012, ONI had a very successful collaboration with the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts presenting the multimedia concert; *A Source of Light, a Musical Portrait Illuminating the Life and Times of Henry Ossawa Tanner* through *Arias, Duets and Love Letters* performed by the *Vocal Artists of Opera North, Inc.* This production was presented in conjunction with PAFA's Henry Ossawa Tanner: Modern Spirit exhibition.

The national organization OPERA America invited Opera North, Inc. to make two special presentations at the June 2012 OPERA America Conference held in Philadelphia.

The presentations consisted of a panel discussion conducted by ONI representatives and a live performance of *Transitions: Sung Stories*. The panel discussion was a highlight of an all-day seminar titled *Creative Aging*. In addition, a documentary was presented that focused on ONI's engagement of senior citizens while combining opera, the humanities, and the community in a new American operatic work. ONI's second presentation for the OPERA America Conference was an excerpted live performance of *Transitions: Sung Stories* held at the request of OPERA America as the final performance of the conference.



## Annual Report 2012

Opera North, Inc has delivered stunning and accessible performances to non-traditional audiences for more than 30 years. Whether it is our fully staged productions of new operas or our concert versions of traditional works, the response is the same... **"BRAVO"**. **"POWERFUL"**, **"No less than dazzling"**. We know you will agree. ONI accomplishes its goals on a modest budget and has not had a budget deficit under its current administration. Dollars raised are very well managed and produce an enormous amount of high level programming.

## ONI's OPERA FOR SENIORS

ONI's Opera for Seniors program was presented at the White Horse Village, January 2012. The Chair of the Performing Arts Committee responded with the following quote: *"I knew I had to tell you how wonderful your performers were before I went to bed tonight. The selection of music was excellent and they blew everyone away with their interpretations. At the end of the show the residents stood and cheered. I made sure I personally thanked each performer, wished them well and expressed the intent to have them back."*





Ms. Chase-Riboud  
Author  
Poet  
Sculptor

### ***Portrait of a Nude Woman as Cleopatra***

ONI's innovative programming contributes new works to American opera repertoire as evidenced by the creation and studio recording of Barbara Chase Riboud's *Portrait of a Nude Woman as Cleopatra*.

Barbara Chase-Riboud is a prize-winning poet and author of five widely acclaimed and translated historical novels including: the bestselling *Sally Hemings*. She is the winner of the Janet Kafka Prize for best novel written by an American. She is the recipient of the American Library Association prize for best novel in 2004. Ms. Chase-Riboud received a knighthood in arts and letters from the French government in 1996.

The 2012 Opera North, Inc. CD release *Portrait of a Nude Woman as Cleopatra* is issued on iTunes, Amazon, Spotify, CD Baby and other prominent internet music stores. ONI's first commercial CD release is an example of ONI providing new performance and marketing outlets to benefit its audience's American opera experience. This recording features the international award winning tenor Issachah Savage and the highly revered Richmond, VA soprano Lisa Edwards-Burrs.



Issachah Savage will make his Metropolitan Opera debut in the spring of 2015. During the 2013 – 2014, season, Mr. Savage made his Houston Grand Opera debut. He is the recipient of the 2014 Seattle Opera International Wagner Competition winning the Top Prize, the orchestra prize and the audience prize.

Ms. Edwards-Burrs has received numerous prizes and awards including the Carson Silver Medal in the Savannah! Onstage American Traditions Vocal Competition and the Outstanding Vocalist of the Year for Excellence in the Arts from Richmond Magazine.

### ***Jazz Goes To The Opera***

In 2013 ONI created and introduced a new signature program to its performance roster:

*Jazz Goes To The Opera*. This program embodies two divergent artistic worlds to make a new American music statement for ONI's audience. *Jazz Goes To The Opera* combines the exceptional operatic vocal talents of ONI performing artists with the elite Philadelphia based jazz artists whose resumes include international tours with some of jazz's premiere world class head liners. This program is another ONI offering to expand the horizon of the traditional opera lover while engaging and heightening the artistic experience for the traditional and nontraditional concertgoer

## ***Visual Soundscapes Mental Health Pathways to Recovery***

ONI's Executive Director Leslie Burrs has coordinated a partnership with Philadelphia's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) at their request to address the national concerns regarding mental health illness and substance abuse through art. Mr. Burrs has created *Visual Soundscapes Mental Health Pathways to Recovery*.

*Visual Soundscapes* is designed to establish a new model for substance abuse and mental health service delivery, education, awareness, and stigma reduction. The *Visual Soundscapes* project is a multi-phased series of music films to be created and produced by award winning composer Leslie Savoy Burrs based on Dr. Arthur C. Evans' *A Systems Approach to Recovery-Oriented Care: Concepts and Examples from Philadelphia*. The *Visual Soundscapes* project will demonstrate how, through music, song, and video, communities will be engaged to increase their knowledge and expanding attitudes about mental health and substance use.

Phase One of the *Visual Soundscapes* project is the 2014 creation of the music film *Autumn Journey*. This is the inaugural work of an anticipated series of recovery care music films to be create for DBHIDS in conjunction with Opera North, Inc. and Leslie Burrs.

The *Visual Soundscapes/Autumn Journey* project is a perfect example of how Opera North, Inc. is representing Philadelphia and Montgomery County in substantial, meaningful ways through art. WHYY's *Friday Arts* TV program is currently shooting a segment on the *Autumn Journey* project highlighting Opera North, DBHIDS and Mr. Burrs' work as an artist/administrator in relationship to this film project.

