

AFTER SCHOOL OPERA PROGRAM 2013/2014 PARENT HANDBOOK



Photo: COC

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WELCOME

The After School Opera Program is for children ages seven to 12. A maximum of 25 students can participate per term at each of the five locations where the program is offered.

Children learn about many aspects of opera including singing, acting, directing and set and costume design through hands-on experiences and the expertise of special guests. The participants use what they have learned and apply it to a new work written either by composer and program leader Dean Burry, or by choreographer/director/conductor Markus Howard. Participants perform the world premiere of this new opera to family and friends during the final class.

This program is subsidized by the COC and individual donors, and is sponsored by Scotiabank and The McLean Foundation.



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Does my child need to be able to sing opera?

No experience with opera or the performing arts is necessary!

Who teaches the class?

The classes at our Etobicoke, North District Toronto, West Central Toronto, and East Central Toronto locations are led by composer and educator Dean Burry, who has worked with the COC as a teacher for over 15 years. The classes at our North York District location are led by choreographer/director/conductor Markus Howard, who began working with the COC as a teacher last year. Markus has extensive experience teaching performing arts to both children and youth in Canada and abroad.

Dean and Markus work with a program assistant at each location. Program assistants are high school or post-secondary students with a keen interest and/or experience in working with children.

All of our educators, including special guests, have received police clearances.

The program is limited to a ratio of one educator to 12 children. This means that the program is capped at approximately 25 students.

What will my child do in the program?

Here is a brief outline of the activities that your child will experience in the program (the schedule and content may vary from location to location):

Week 1 – Introduction to the art form

In this introductory session, participants explore the multidisciplinary nature of opera through activities that focus on singing, acting and the visual arts. Participants are encouraged to play an active role in the creation of their opera.

Week 2 – Casting, libretto writing

Participants will receive a script of the opera (called a libretto), based on the ideas brainstormed in the first session. Participants will be cast and assigned at least one line to say in the performance. Please work with your child to help them memorize their lines early in the process!

Week 3 – Characterization and staging

With most of the music written and lines nearly memorized, participants work on characterization (how they perform their roles) and staging (who does what in each scene). The program leader and assistant will teach participants acting techniques, including character development, projection, and focus. The opera is beginning to take shape! Children are encouraged to rehearse their lines at home.

Week 4 – Workshop led by special guest*

A special guest with experience in a particular field will lead participants in a special hands-on and creative workshop that will give their opera an added flair. Past guests have included opera singers, directors, set designers, African drummers and ballet dancers, stage combat instructors, wig and make-up specialists, clowns and mimes, among others!

Weeks 5 and 6 – Rehearsal, perfecting the music

Participants will finish learning the libretto and will begin to work on perfecting the flow of the performance. During these two weeks, the program leader and assistant will lead participants in fun, music- and drama-based activities that will help build their new skills.

Week 7 and/or 8 – Workshop led by special guest* and finish staging

Now that all the material has been learned and the staging is complete, it is time to perfect the opera in anticipation of the performance. Participants will learn how to incorporate hand-made props and some costume pieces. A guest artist with professional singing experience will teach participants about proper vocal technique.

Week 9 and/or 10 – Dress rehearsal and performance

The performance will take place at 5:15 p.m. during the final session. Family and friends are welcome to attend. A detailed note will be sent home closer to the date with more information. The performance will be followed by a reception with light refreshments.

*Guest visit dates may vary.

May I watch a class?

To be fair to all program participants and due to limited space, visitors and guests are not permitted to sit in on COC programs. Performances showcasing the hard work of the participants occur at the end of each program.



PERFORMANCE

When is the performance?

The performance takes place at 5:15 p.m. on the day of the last class. The class begins at the regular time, and friends and family are admitted into the program room at approximately 5 p.m. in time for the performance.



WHAT TO BRING

Does my child need to bring anything with them?

We recommend that children bring a nut-free snack and a refillable water bottle that is clearly labelled with their name. Participants are given a break at approximately 5 p.m.

Children should wear appropriate clothing for active fun. As neither wet footwear (including socks) nor bare feet are permitted in the program space, children should bring or wear a pair of dry indoor shoes and/or socks.



RULES OF THE PROGRAM

What are the rules of the program?

We ask that children be respectful of the following rules, which will be introduced early in the program:

- Hands and bodies to ourselves
- Listen to teachers, and to each other
- Share your ideas and respect the ideas of others
- Be kind, and use respectful words and behaviour
- Be creative and have fun!



PROGRAM POLICIES

Program Hours

The program runs from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Please be sure to drop off and pick up your child on time.

Sign-in

At City of Toronto locations, you need to sign your child in upon arrival. At the St. Christopher House location, you do not need to sign your child in upon arrival. At all locations, we will follow-up with a phone call if an expected participant has not arrived by 4:30 p.m.

Sign-out

Your child must be signed out by their approved parent/guardian at the end of each session. Photo ID is required at the time of pick-up. With your written permission, your child can sign themselves out of the session. We will not allow any participant to leave with someone for whom we do not already have written permission. Please be sure to alert the site if pick-up permissions change.

If Your Child is Unable to Attend

It is important for us to know if your child will be unable to attend a session. Please send a note with your child addressed to the lead artist or program assistant at least one week prior to the expected absence. If you are unable to give advance notice of your child's absence, please contact the site as soon as possible. Refer to contact list on page 8.

If Your Child is Ill

If your child is unable to fully participate in the program due to health reasons (i.e. flu), do not send him/her to the program. Contact the site as soon as possible to let us know that your child will be away due to illness. Children who become ill during the program will be kept in the program room, but isolated from other children as much as possible to prevent the spread of illness. A parent or guardian will be called in order to pick up the child.

Children with Allergies

The COC and its partner sites strive to maintain a nut-free environment. Please do not send your child to the program with any nuts, or snacks with nuts in them. If your child has a life-threatening allergy or a medical condition, details must be included with your registration. At the St. Christopher House location, parents/guardians are required to complete a Health and Safety Form on or before the first day of the program.

Children with Extra Support Needs

If your child has any special needs, details must be included with your registration. Please speak with the site co-ordinator (refer to page 8) during registration about specific concerns. Locations are wheelchair accessible. Please note: We cannot provide one-on-one supervision or specific medical support. For specifics surrounding this policy, please refer to our comprehensive policies available at coc.ca/Explore.

Registration Policy (at St. Christopher House)

Registration starts on September 9. Due to the overwhelming popularity of the program there are limitations on enrolment. To ensure that ALL children get a chance to participate, a child can register for one of the three terms. The same child may be put on a waiting list for the other terms. Children who have never participated in the program will get priority over those on the waiting list.

Refund Policy

There are no refunds except in the event of program cancellation.

Missed Sessions

The COC will not hold make-up sessions nor offer a refund for missed sessions.

Attendance Policy

If a participant does not attend the first two sessions of the program without notifying education and outreach, the participant's spot in the program may be compromised. We ask that children participating in ASOP do their best to attend all of every session (from 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.), so that they can learn their part in preparation for the performance.

Lateness

If a participant is consistently late to the program, without notifying the COC in advance, the participant's spot in the program may be compromised.

Late Pick-Up

It is the responsibility of the parent/designated person to pick up their child when the session ends. Participants are never allowed to:

- Wait unsupervised
- Leave alone without written permission submitted to the COC
- Leave the program unless signed out by an adult who has been identified on the registration form as having received permission by a parent/guardian

In the event that the child has been picked up late more than once, the participant's



involvement in the program may be reviewed.

Note: Any After School Opera Program operating at a City of Toronto Community Centre or St. Christopher House is obligated to adhere to each organization's policies. The COC is not responsible for the cancellation of the programs at these centres for any reason not caused by the COC.

Code of Conduct

This code applies to participants, families, school groups, community partners, volunteers, speakers, artist educators, Canadian Opera Company (COC) employees and visitors.

The COC believes that every person participating in its programming deserves the freedom to explore opera in a safe and welcoming environment that fosters creative collaboration amongst all participants, and provides each person with an equal opportunity to engage in the art form. Equality and respect are the pillars on which the programs are built. Failure to act in a manner which recognizes the dignity and rights of each individual can result in disciplinary measures, dismissals or removals from programs. The COC Violence and Harassment Policy is in place both to guide the behaviour of all people involved in COC education and outreach initiatives, and to protect them in the event that they encounter harassment or violence in COC programs. All staff and volunteers are required to review the COC's Violence, Harassment, and Behaviour Management Policy.

The COC has a policy of zero tolerance towards violence and harassment in the workforce.

This policy is enforced to protect participants, teachers, and staff.

Our extensive Violence and Harassment Policy is available for parents of participants to review upon request. If allegations of violence and/or harassment (bullying, intimidation) are brought to the attention of education and outreach staff members, an investigation is immediately launched into the incident in accordance with our policies.

A) Violence

"Violence" is defined as

- i) The use, or attempted use, of physical force against another individual while on COC premises
- ii) An action or statement that can reasonably be considered a threat of physical violence
- iii) Bringing a weapon of any kind to the COC or threatening to bring a weapon to the COC (the use of a "fake" weapon also falls under this definition of violent behaviour.)

It goes without saying that none of these behaviours is acceptable in an educational context. If a participant displays violent behaviour, he or she will be isolated from other participants and the parents will be asked to immediately pick up the participant. The participant will not be invited to return to the program and may not be permitted to attend future programs, depending on the context for the violent behaviour.

B) Harassment

"Harassment" means engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a person that is known, or reasonably ought to be known, unwelcome. Amongst children, harassing behaviour could include behaviours commonly called "name calling," "hurtful teasing," or intimidation. "Harassment" is a term most often applied to the workplace - in an educational setting, the same behaviours are called "bullying."

Working in a creative environment requires openness and teamwork amongst program participants, and a large part of educational programming involves learning how to work together with other people. For these reasons, we encourage children to talk through their problems together at every opportunity. Unfortunately, in situations of peer-to-peer harassment (“bullying”), this isn’t always possible, and so we also encourage participants to share their concerns with program staff if they feel they are experiencing harassment by another child in our programs.

C) Distracting Behaviour/Behaviour not in keeping with a Supportive Peer Environment

When a participant exhibits behaviour that interferes with the creation of a supportive environment or which interferes with his or her peers’ enjoyment of planned activities, COC program assistants and artist educators will address it on a case-by-case basis, operating from a model based on creative redirection. Parents will be contacted if a participant repeatedly disrupts the program. Participants who repeatedly disrupt the program may be asked to leave the program.

Privacy Statement and Photography Release

The COC takes the issue of privacy seriously. The COC follows responsible information handling practices, in keeping with privacy laws. We collect and use personal data pertaining to education and outreach programs to ensure the safety of participants, for statistical purposes, and to inform you about the education and outreach programs in which you are registered. You may also receive periodic mailings from us with information about other education and outreach programs that may be of interest to you.

Any photographs or video taken of you/your child while participating in education and outreach programs by an employee or representative of the COC will become property of the COC and may be used for various promotional purposes. If you or your family wishes otherwise, please inform education and outreach before the start of the program.

Medical Treatment Authorization

Participants in education and outreach programs are responsible for their own medical coverage.

As the parent or guardian of the participant in the After School Opera Program, you give permission to the COC to arrange emergency medical care including hospitalization/transportation, if necessary. You agree to hereby release the COC from all liability and claims arising in relation to any matter including personal injury or damage to/loss of property that occurs from participation in any education and outreach activity. You agree to hereby indemnify the COC from, and against, such claims.

Changes in Programming

The COC reserves the right to make changes in programming at any time.



**CONTACT
INFORMATION**

Partner Centre Contacts:

Ourland Community Centre

John Salajka, 416-394-8673

Barbara Frum Recreation Centre

Betty Fallis-Trow, 416-395-6123

St. Christopher House School of Music

Sherry Squires, 416-532-4828 x. 127

St. Lawrence Community Recreation Centre

Kerry Mills, 416-392-1347

Pleasantview Community Centre

Mark McKay, 416-395-6006

BY MAIL

Canadian Opera Company
Education and Outreach
227 Front St. E.
Toronto, ON M5A 1E8

BY TELEPHONE

416-306-2385 x. 2307

BY E-MAIL

education@coc.ca



**STAY IN
TOUCH!**



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@alexanderncoc



/canadianopera



/canadianoperacompany

Listen to COC Radio! coc.ca/COCRadio

E-mail us at education@coc.ca

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