Guide to the Ithaca Opera Association Collection

The History Center in Tompkins County
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Collection Number V-64-6-9

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

This large collection is a detailed record of both the creative and business sides of a nonprofit performing arts organization during the 54 years of its existence.

Originally named the Ithaca Civic Opera Group, this organization was founded in 1949 by Ken Baumann, who had been a stage director and general manager for opera companies in Germany before escaping from the Nazis. In 1966 the Group incorporated under its new name, the Ithaca Opera Association (IOA). The IOA produced three mainstage operas a year, including a winter holiday show. By the mid-1980s, its outreach was formalized and included the opera workshop; a paid ensemble troupe that performed in schools and in the community; and summer touring productions. During 1986 – 1991, under project CoOPERAtion, the IOA taught Ithaca’s middle school students about opera and guided them in writing and producing them.

In order to oversee so much activity, in the mid-1980s the IOA hired a full-time, paid music director/administrator and started renting a production office. At this time, the board’s duties changed from administering the IOA to planning and fund-raising. Unfortunately, it was not able to sustain the necessary funding, and in 2003 the Ithaca Opera Association went bankrupt and closed its doors.

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Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in …, label undated; performed 9/90, Outreach 7/87, Gala 3/88 one tape
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