

◦ OPERA LAB



SOLO ◦ CANTO

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SoloCanto Cultural Association was founded in 2001 with the aim of promoting the approach of children to music through polyphonic singing.

Over the years, to the choir, other artistic forms have been added such as dance, percussions and theater with the collaboration of important personalities.

The choir of Solocanto voices has involved children aged 4 to 14 and became one of the most important choral hubs for the youngest in Milan.

Since 2014, thanks to the meeting between the choir and orchestra director Pilar Bravo and the stage director Federica Santambrogio, SoloCanto Association has developed "LaboratorioOpera" project with the aim of bringing children and young people closer to opera with a particular fondness for contemporary opera.

Along with the training project the SoloCanto Association started to produce Contemporary Opera as a living art form, able to deal with topics close to today's public and to present itself as a vehicle for communication and culture.

For the training project SoloCanto developed the LaboratorioOpera project, while the contemporary opera productions are signed by the name of the company "Op.64".

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LaboratorioOpera takes place every year for two or three weeks from the end of the school until the end of June.

It is an intensive workshop for children from 8 to 16 years old. Children are divided into choir/ drama, orchestra, set design / costumes and dance.

Since 2014 LaboratorioOpera has produced 4 unpublished works and one opera composed by the Oscar winner Rachel Portman:

- from 2014 to 2016 the trilogy Salis and the world balance, by Matteo Manzitti, libretto by Daniela Morelli, an opera for boys choir and youth orchestra staged at Teatro Studio Melato in Milan. The Salis project, which also includes an iBook and an iPad app, won the Andersen award for the best multimedia product of 2016.

- In 2017 we won the third prize at SIAE "Saranno Famosi" Competition with the opera *Il bambino di Itaca*, music by Matteo Manzitti, libretto by Daniela Morelli.
- The production of 2018 was Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince*

Since 2015 there is a winter version of LaboratorioOpera with which we have put on stage some small works: *Chip and his dog* by the composer Gian Carlo Menotti, at the Castello Sforzesco, *La nave promessa* (based on a novel by David Foster Wallace) in the Foyer of the Teatro Franco Parenti and *Il paese delle ombre* (based on a novel by Murakami) by Manzitti / Morelli which debuted at the Museo del Novecento in the beautiful Sala Fontana.

Op. 64

In 2016, with the first production in the professional field, we created the first Contemporary Opera Company in Italy. *Love Hurts* by Nicola Moro premiered in Milan at Piccolo Teatro with a group of young, newly graduated singers assisted by professionals.

The work then continued on its path debuting at the Symphony Space in New York for the Center for Contemporary Opera Festival.

In 2017 we tackled the great theme of diversity with the opera *Deeply*, a work for 5 cellos, a soprano and an actress. *Deeply* made its debut in London at the Tete à tete Festival. Music by Matteo Manzitti and libretto by Daniela Morelli.

The SoloCanto Association has activated collaborations with some excellent international companies, including the Center for Contemporary Opera in New York and the Compagnie Opera D'Asporto in Geneva.

Our intent is to approach the opera with the freedom to choose the topics, the beauty of writing music to measure, the ability to produce shows without prohibitive costs, to represent them in venues that are not necessarily conventional, to experiment without the network of protection, to let people fall in love with contemporary music because it is closer and more immediate than people usually think and because it is part of our contemporary world.

since 2014

OPERA LAB

Opera workshop for kids and teens

2014 SALIS IN FUGA music by M. Manzitti, libretto D. Morelli

2015 SALIS NELLA REGIONE DELL'ACQUA DOLCE music by M. Manzitti, libretto D. Morelli

2016 SALIS E L'EQUILIBRIO DEI REGNI music by M. Manzitti, libretto D. Morelli

2017 IL BAMBINO DI ITACA music by M. Manzitti, libretto D. Morelli

2018 THE LITTLE PRINCE music by Rachel Portman, libretto Nicholas Wrig

2019 DIDO&AENEAS - OLYMPUS GAMES 2019 music by Henry Purcell/M. Manzitti, libretto Nahum Tate/D. Morelli

Introduction

The Opera workshop format was first adopted in June of 2014, in the Piccolo Teatro of Milan. It included 40 persons total: 35 kids ranging from the age of 7 to 15 years, 3 theatre professionals and 2 assistants. In 2017 we reached 74 children involved in 4 different sections: theatre/choir, orchestra, dance and set design.

The outcome was outstanding and the enthusiasm demonstrated by the kids was striking. Not only did they work tenaciously for 2 weeks, remaining on task and concentrated during the daily sessions, but they also loved learning the musical and choral complexities of the show, as they also learned to appreciate contemporary opera.

Even weeks after the termination of the workshop, parents were still sending emails about their children singing and dancing all day long! These amazing results have shown the effectiveness of this workshop and have reinforced the importance of sharing it with the rest of the world.

The team of professionals comprises a play writer, a composer who includes the different musical instruments of the children as they join the workshop, a choir teacher able to teach beginner level kids the fundamentals of singing, and a stage director to lead the performers, teaching them the principles of movement and recitation in the opera and to direct the final show.

The hosting theatre must be able to provide at least 2 rooms with ample space to practice in for the duration of the workshop, and a theater hall for the final show. The two practice rooms are necessary so that the choir and the orchestra can work separately for the first week of the workshop. The appearance of the theatre must be kept in consideration for it is an important factor in the children's first impression of the theatre, which may also be the child's first contact with the world theatre.

The workshop should be 2-3 weeks long, full time, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. There are a multitude of different activities that are included in the workshop, which employ many different learning style, so as to maximize the interest and concentration of the children.

OperaLab won the third prize of "SIAE -Saranno Famosi" for Il bambino di Itaca - 2017 and the project SALIS won the Andersen Prize for the best multimedia project for children.

WHAT PEOPLE THINK ABOUT US

"This was such an amazing experience! It was exciting and moving, and I found that this enriching workshop truly helped Emma grow! Thanks again."

"Amazing Show!"

"...my utmost gratitude for the amazing job you executed."

"A big thanks for a great performance and a wonderful experience for the kids."

"Thank you Federica! We all agree with Pilar, that Salis is some sort of virus; for the past month we've been reliving the opera everyday in our house, constantly singing the salis tunes. We miss all of you already, and we can't wait to repeat this experience in autumn! A big hug to everyone."

"Thank you for all of your hard work. Now the only singing we hear in our house is Salis songs!"

"I keep telling my friends and family about the amazing experience we lived. Even now, looking at the videos, I'm shocked at how much you achieved in those short 2 weeks!"

"Truly, thank you."



REVIWES

AMADEUS - Wednesday July 18, 2018 (The Little Prince)

CORRIERE DELLA SERA - Saturday June 18, 2014

A contemporary opera for children and teens. Yet, not destined for them, but acted, sang and played by young children ranging from the ages of 7 to 15. And where can one experience such a wonderful spectacle? Where does such a unusual performance occur? Answer: today, at 3 pm in the Teatro Studio Melato. The name of the opera is "Salis escapes", which is the result of a two-week long experimental opera workshop that includes children and teens from all over Europe. The workshop started June 16th, lead and organized by stage director Federica Santambrogio, choir director Pilar Bravo and orchestra director Matteo Manzitti. There were no auditions for the performers who wanted to participate. The book was written by Daniela Morelli and illustrated by Paolo d'Atlan. The script is about a 14 year old girl who lives in a world dominated by Salt Crystals, where humans are slaves to these tyrannous beings. Salisedine finds herself in the prime conditions for a revolution and embarks on an adventure that would lead to the restoration of peace once again. "We believe that we can use music and theatre to bring together people of different ages and skill groups", states stage director Federica Santambrogio, graduate of the Academy of Teatro alla Scala. The musical score was composed keeping in consideration the diverse skills and abilities of the children. "All that remains is to sit back, relax and enjoy this unique and innovative show (if only there were more projects like this in Milan! It would surely be a more beautiful and cultured city).

CORRIERE DELLA SERA - Sunday July 13, 2014

"...Federica Santambrogio, 42 year old stage director and graduate of the Teatro alla Scala, is the person to go to for anything and all things theater. A couple months ago she decided to challenge herself by producing an opera entirely comprised of teens and children from the ages of 7 to 15. An ambitious proposal for an opera in Milan in the middle of summer. Nevertheless, with the Associazione SoloCanto, she was able to organize a 2 week long summer camp at the Piccolo Teatro Studio. And 35 kids enrolled! Not bad for a first-time experimental workshop. "Theatre and music made it possible to combine children of different age groups and skill levels in a way that surprised me" says Federica. The final show which was performed last Saturday, had such a successful outcome that it convinced her to organize another workshop in autumn. "The kids themselves insisted!". Because of the amazing results of the first workshop, the second one will most likely include the same choir and orchestra directors; Pilar Bravo and Matteo Manzitti, and obviously the author of the story, Daniela Morelli. See you next season!



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