

Boheme Opera NJ is one of the oldest opera arts organizations in New Jersey. Since its earliest endeavor in 1989, the company's mission continues to be to make world-class musical performance accessible and available in the New Jersey-Pennsylvania region through opera, concerts and outreach.

Early Years

Boheme Opera NJ's history began in the most unassuming of places: a simple church parking lot. The company took its first steps in 1982, seven years before it was officially launched, with an outdoor production of *I Pagliacci*. The formative years that followed saw small milestones that helped to set the stage for 1989, when Boheme Opera NJ ushered in its inaugural season as a producer of opera theater with productions of Verdi's *La Traviata* at Trenton Central High School and in Truman High School in Bristol, Pennsylvania.

Within its first five main stage seasons, Boheme Opera NJ developed its repertoire and mission, offering growing audiences pre-curtain talks, projected English supertitles, original sets and costumes, casting of accomplished artists from the rosters of major U.S. companies and abroad, collaborative classic ballet sequences and open invited dress rehearsals. During this time, the company also established its model for educational outreach, including its High School Apprenticeship Program, backstage tours, a visiting opera program with local middle schools and college course presentations. During this period, the company established its new home at the Patriots Theater of the War Memorial in Trenton.

Maturing Years

In 1994, Boheme Opera NJ temporarily moved its main stage to Villa Victoria Academy in Ewing, where the company spent five seasons while the War Memorial received a long-awaited facelift and restoration. The early months of 2000 marked the debut of the company's premier educational initiative Inside Opera, a curriculum-based middle and high school program that would come to serve over 7,500 students in Mercer, Burlington and Monmouth Counties.

Today

In recent seasons, Boheme Opera NJ has shown its stage versatility by presenting works that embody the spectacle of opera, but are not recognized as traditional opera, including Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* (which received American Masterpiece Program funding from the National Endowment for the Arts), which exemplified Boheme Opera NJ's goal of broadening its programming to cultivate a new generation of prospective opera goers.

While economic and entertainment trends are changing, the company is seeking avenues to attract younger and more diverse audiences. It recently facilitated an accredited college internship opportunity with Mercer County Community College for students pursuing careers in opera and theater, while continuing to offer professional experience to young choristers, emerging artists, and professional designers and directors.

The College of New Jersey Center for the Arts

In 2011, Boheme Opera NJ began another chapter in its history with debuts of two comic chamber operas by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi at its new home at The College of New Jersey Center for the Arts. The Center for the Arts is comprised of a number of performance halls, including an intimate black box theater, a concert hall and the Kendall Hall main stage theater. The new relationship with the Center is a natural fit for Boheme Opera NJ, as both are focused on bringing the arts home to New Jersey through programming and outreach. It also serves as a triumphant return and reunion for co-founders Joseph and Sandra Pucciatti, both of whom are music program graduates of what was then Trenton State College