

PHOTO BY TIM WILKERSON



KIDS TRY ON COSTUMES AT ATLANTA OPERA FAMILY DAY

## Starting them young

ATLANTA OPERA ENCHANTS YOUNG AUDIENCES BY HOLLY BERETTO

This past March, in elementary schools across the Atlanta area, kids sat rapt as the age-old story of *The Ugly Duckling* was told, with its moral of finding out who you are and where you belong. Everyone's familiar with the tale, but these youngsters got to see and hear it in a whole new way, as the Atlanta Opera Studio Tour brought it to their classrooms with vivid costumes, upbeat music—and operatic arias.

Opera? For kids? Absolutely.

Atlanta Opera offers education and outreach through a variety of programs. The production of *"The Ugly Duckling,"* is staged for kids in kindergarten through fifth grade. Four singers from the Atlanta Opera Studio, part of the company's education arm, visit elementary schools with a pianist and perform this short fable-based opera. The annual studio tour has been a community favorite for years, with productions such as *Duckling* and *The Baker of Seville* helping introduce children to the art of opera.

"Getting kids interested in it at a young age is crucially important," says soprano Rebecca Kier, who sings the roles of the Pig and the Teenage Duck in *The Ugly Duckling*. "Nearly every school we go to is captivated by all that opera encompasses—the singing, sets, costumes, acting."

Kier, an Atlanta Opera Chorus member, often performs smaller roles in the company main stage productions (she'll sing Papagena in *The Magic Flute* this spring) in addition to singing on the studio tour. She says that young people often don't have the chance to be exposed to opera, so performances like these touring shows are crucial to having children see what opera

looks and sounds like.

"Kids are brutally honest," she says. "Most adult opera audiences have a preconceived notion of what they are about to experience, whereas most of the children do not. It's a wonderful gift for us [performers] to see their reactions and responses to an art form that they are experiencing for the first time, especially in such an intimate setting."

**Kids are brutally honest. Most adult opera audiences have a preconceived notion of what they are about to experience, whereas most of the children do not. It's a wonderful gift for us [performers] to see their reactions and responses to an art form that they are experiencing for the first time, especially in such an intimate setting.**

The artists on the studio tour stay after each performance and answer questions kids might have, further enhancing the idea that opera can be a community outreach vehicle.

### Education from day one

In addition to the touring shows, Atlanta Opera hosts a popular Opera Family Day each spring (this year's was March 27), where children and families can watch a performance of the current touring opera, walk through the instrument "petting zoo," try on



TENOR WESLEY MORGAN (L) ENTERTAINS AN INTIMATE AUDIENCE.

costumes, watch stage combat demonstrations and make arts and crafts.

"Opera Family Day is a culmination of our touring performances," says Cristina Vásquez Herrera, director of communications, who emphasizes that Atlanta Opera has had an education component since its inception 30 years ago.

**Getting kids interested in it at a young age is crucially important. Nearly every school we go to is captivated by all that opera encompasses—the singing, sets, costumes, acting.**

Atlanta Opera also hosts numerous other education and outreach experiences for both older children and adults. The education department provides in-depth study guides about each opera in the main stage season for area teachers to use in class. They meet Georgia's Performance Standards and are designed to be used prior to or after seeing a performance. Student Shorts are abridged versions of the season's operas, open to middle and high schools. For adults, Opera 101 is a multimedia information session, spotlighting the history, background and storyline for each of the season's operas. Pre-opera Talks, held an hour before each performance, provide a sneak peak into the opera ticket holders are about to see. (Both Opera 101 and Pre-opera Talks are free).

"We really want to educate people about what we do," says Vásquez Herrera, "and show them how great opera really is." **gm**

## EDUCATION CALENDAR SUMMER CAMPS

Georgia offers a variety of summer music and band camps with registrations taking place now. Here are a few; check with your local college or university for additional opportunities:

### Multiple sessions in June & July

#### Camp Jam Atlanta

Day Camp, Kidz Camp or Overnight Camp  
Several different camp formats and times are available, but all offer programs that teach instrument skills, creativity, self-confidence and teamwork while developing young rock 'n' rollers.  
campjam.com/Atlanta

#### June 6-10

#### Summer Music Camp

Hugh Hodgson School of Music, UGA, Athens  
Grades 6-12 descend on the UGA campus for an intensive, five-day musical experience with private lessons, rehearsals, performances and master classes.  
uga.edu/music/summercamp

#### June 6-10

#### GCSU Jazz Band Camp

Georgia College and State University, Milledgeville  
The only summer camp in Georgia totally dedicated to jazz includes classes in theory, history, improvisation, big band, and master class-

es for each instrument for grades 9-12.  
gcsu.edu/music

#### June 7-10

#### Bravo! Music Camp

Berry College, Rome  
Grades 5-9 enjoy a wide range of musical experiences, including master classes and full ensemble instruction, along with recreational activities and more.  
bravomusiccamp.com

#### June 13-19

#### FAME Summer Camp

Berry College, Rome  
The Firsthand Arts and Music Experience for grades 9-12 combines band, orchestra, performance, dance, ceramics, drawing, painting and graphic design in a college setting.  
berry.edu/fame

#### June 13-20

#### 7th Annual Middle School/High School Band Camp

Clark Atlanta University  
Study at the home of the prestigious CAU Marching Panthers

with a week of intense instruction and activities including a cookout, mixer, talent show and Mr. and Mrs. SBC Pageant.  
caubands.com

#### June 14-18

#### Spivey Hall Summer Music Camp

Clayton State University  
Singing, sight-reading, music theory, Orff instruments, folk dancing and more make for a nurturing and creative experience for grades 4-7.  
spiveyhall.org/education/summercamp

#### June 21-25

#### Summer Band Camp

Augusta State University  
Middle and high schoolers work on band repertoire and instrumental skills and can also participate in beginning guitar and piano, world drumming and jazz band.  
cde.aug.edu/conservatory/camps

#### June 21-25

#### 3rd Annual Otis Redding Singer/Songwriter Camp

Georgia Music Hall of Fame, Macon

Ages 12-17 learn the fundamentals of songwriter through classes, workshops, group writing exercises and performances and Q&A sessions with a variety of Georgia singer/songwriters.  
georgiamusic.org

#### June 20-26

#### Townsend School of Music Band and Orchestra Camp

Mercer University, Macon  
Middle and high schoolers further develop their performance abilities through private instrumental lessons, master classes and two concert performances.  
mercer.edu/music

#### July 12 - 17

#### Girls Rock Camp ATL

Atlanta Charter Middle School  
Girls ages 10-16 learn guitar, bass, keyboard, drums or vocals and participate in workshops encouraging freedom of expression, self-esteem and self and community respect.  
girlsrockcampatl.org