

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 503

Commending Opera on the James.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 14, 2015

Agreed to by the Senate, January 15, 2015

WHEREAS, music is the most ancient and fundamental form of art by which the human spirit strives to express its mystical intuition of the harmonies of the cosmos; and

WHEREAS, the literary drama arose, most perfectly in the Classical period of Ancient Greece, as the form of art with which to articulate in language the oppositions of comedy and tragedy experienced in human community and also, emphatically, the oppositions of comedy and tragedy, joy and sorrow, as they are experienced within the human heart; and

WHEREAS, the fusion of these art forms—of sound and word, of melody and text—is found in all the cultures of antiquity and again most perfectly in the staged dramas and their accompanying choruses in the works of Classical Greece; and

WHEREAS, it was during the re-engagement with Classical forms that characterized the Renaissance that the Italians, and foremost among them the younger artists of Florence, conceived the modern (or "new-era") form of art that we now know as opera; and

WHEREAS, this marriage of musical composition and text—of lyric and libretto, voice and verse, dance and design—complementing and arising from dramatic action, has for four centuries established opera among the highest of all artistic expressions; and

WHEREAS, Opera on the James was incorporated in 2005 to bring to a large area of Virginia, centered in Lynchburg, the inimitable experiences of the live performance of operatic masterworks; and

WHEREAS, in the decade since its founding, Opera on the James has earned recognition and support from the National Endowment for the Arts, Virginia Commission for the Arts, Opera America—by which Opera on the James is recognized as a Level Four Professional Company—The Greater Lynchburg Community Trust, the Easley Charitable Trust, and the Lynchburg Office of Economic Development; and

WHEREAS, Opera on the James has enjoyed collaborations and partnerships with Lynchburg Public Schools, Virginia School of the Arts, Dance Theatre of Lynchburg, Cantata Children's Chorus, Lynchburg College Choral Union, Sweet Briar College Choir, Hampden-Sydney Men's Chorus, Liberty University Chamber Singers, Old City Cemetery, Lynchburg Historical Foundation, Amazement Square: The Rightmire Children's Museum, Riverviews Artspace, Westminster Canterbury and The Summit retirement communities, Adult Care of Central Virginia, Jubilee Family Development Center, GarageFest, Lynchburg Literacy Council, Miller Home for Girls, Boys and Girls Clubs, Lynchburg Community Market, Amherst Glebe Arts Response, Randolph College, LINKS, Avoca Museum, and Point of Honor; and

WHEREAS, at least 10,000 residents of Central Virginia have attended at least one of Opera on the James's productions; and

WHEREAS, Opera on the James's inaugural productions, *Three Terrific Tenors* and *Pagliacci*, by Leoncavallo, played to sold-out audiences; and

WHEREAS, Opera on the James productions, presented on the stages of E.C. Glass High School or the Academy of Fine Arts, have included *Così fan tutte* (Mozart); *Tribute to Marian Anderson*; *The Tragedy of Carmen* (Brooks); *Romeo and Juliet* (Gounod); *La Bohème* (Puccini); *La Traviata* (Verdi); *Don Giovanni* (Mozart); *Hansel and Gretel* (Humperdinck); *Three Tenors Encore*; *The Merry Widow* (Lehár); *Tosca* (Puccini); *The Barber of Seville* (Rossini); *Madama Butterfly* (Puccini); *Love Makes the World Go 'Round*; *Elixir of Love* (Donizetti); *Die Fledermaus* (Strauss); *The Magic Flute* (Mozart); *Suor Angelica & Gianni Schicchi* (Puccini); *Bon Appetit!* (Hoiby); and *Little Women* (Adamo); and

WHEREAS, Opera on the James in 2011 launched the Tyler Young Artist Program, which features a quartet of aspiring professional singers selected through nationwide auditions and a master coach and which has since performed annually for more than 5,000 audience members from a wide range of communities, thus fulfilling the hopes of the program's founders, Allen and Jane Tyler of Lexington; and

WHEREAS, Opera on the James has prepared an ambitious 10th anniversary season of major performances, including *La Bohème* (Puccini), *Gala Opera Cabaret*, and *The Marriage of Figaro* (Mozart), as well as programs including an opera film series, lectures, concerts, school visits, a library tour, and shows for children and their families such as "Random Acts of Culture" and surprise performances arranged by "flash mob" performers, while also doubling the Tyler Young Artist Program with two sessions, one in the autumn and one in the spring; and

WHEREAS, Opera on the James strives to engage the rising generation in its programs through

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"Student Preview Performances" of its operas, as well as artist visits to schools throughout the region; and

WHEREAS, the founding leadership of Opera on the James was provided by David Neumeyer, president, and executive committee members John Farnandez, vice president; Beth Doucette, secretary-treasurer; and S. Craig Fields, artistic director; and

WHEREAS, the 10th Anniversary Celebration Season of Opera on the James was conceived by Gail Morrison, president, and Cecelia Schieve, general director, together with executive committee members David Tate, vice president; Jennifer E. Stille, secretary; and Linda Eubank, treasurer, and fellow board of directors members Lucille Deane, Ted Delaney, Joan Foster, Bill Hetzel, Lisa Joyner, Marjorie Keymer, Gene Koster, Doug Lee, Margie Lippard, Jennifer Dooley Tilley, and Susan Timmons; and

WHEREAS, Opera on the James in its 10th anniversary season is at once "celebrating the past [and] assuring the future" by striving to earn major donations to endow the organization for many years to come; and

WHEREAS, Opera on the James has made—and may be expected to continue to make—singular contributions to the flourishing of the arts, and hence the flourishing of life among citizens of the Piedmont Region of Virginia, and has demonstrated this resolve by investing in the Arts and Culture District of Lynchburg by purchasing a building to serve as Opera on the James headquarters and painting the building diva red; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Opera on the James and its many leaders, "Housing Heroes" for visiting performers, donors, and audiences upon reaching a major milestone in the organization's history; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Gail (Mrs. Frank West) Morrison in appreciation of her enthusiastic leadership of Opera on the James for its 10th anniversary season.