

February 13, 2007

Dear Members of the Cultural and Aesthetics Grants Committee,

First of all, let me apologize for not attending the testimony opportunity in person. Weather and schedule change prevented the travel but we are most grateful that you provided this opportunity.

The Intermountain Opera Association of Bozeman produces one of the most anticipated events of the year each spring. This year it will be Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. This opera will be sung in English and has a light happy theme. We expect that we will have three nights of full houses, which means that over 3000 people will attend. We wish to thank you for the support you have provided and will provide to allow us to continue to produce quality Opera in Montana.

The Montana Cultural Trust Grants mean so much to us in terms of outreach. We have always had our poster and program cover, which we could have shown examples of had we been able to attend the hearings, produced by art students at Bozeman High School. The grants help us provide financial awards to the student whose poster is accepted. We also have a program for all 5th graders and special visits to many elementary schools in our efforts to enhance the joy of music for our children. This year we will work closely with the MSU Technology Center and the Extended Studies program to reach even more students and patrons. Grant money will be needed to help this occur.

My husband and I moved to Montana seven years ago from the Denver area where we attended almost all Opera Colorado productions as well as symphony, plays, folk music etc. We did not expect to find the same quality in Bozeman but do believe that we have. There is a freshness here that one doesn't always see in larger venues. Over the years we have seen this same reaction in new people who have moved here from Washington DC, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle and others. Our Opera also draws people from all over the state because it is known for its quality. We bring our conductor and director as well as our major singers from all over the country. Several have sung at major Opera venues including the Metropolitan Opera and currently even in Europe.

All high quality productions cost more and more every year to produce. Montana is known for its beautiful country and out door activities but many of the same people, such as my husband, a retired physician, and I need and want cultural activities, too. Strong support from the state government will keep these types of activities alive in Montana and the word will spread across the country. People who love cultural events often are well educated and bring retirement money into the state, which creates a stronger economy.

I ask that you continue to provide significant support to all cultural activities in Montana and again, on behalf of all who love cultural events, wish to thank you for all we have and will receive to keep us alive and well into the future.

Janet Young

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