

**THE VIRGINIA OPERA ASSOCIATION**

**REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA ADVISORY LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
TO  
THE GOVERNOR  
AND  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



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1978**

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# **THE VIRGINIA OPERA ASSOCIATION**

**Report of the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council**

**to**

**The Governor and the General Assembly of Virginia**

**Richmond, Virginia**

**January, 1978**

To: Honorable Mills E. Godwin, Jr., Governor of Virginia

and

The General Assembly of Virginia

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

As the first century of America's history is largely the story of the struggle to wrest from nature the necessities of life, and as America's second century witnessed the country's growth into the world's greatest industrial power, so, many have come to feel, America's third century will be a period of rapid expansion in the arts and humanities. Recent years have witnessed an increase in state governmental activity directed toward the encouragement of the growth and development of the arts and humanities. In Virginia, this increase in activity has most notably manifested itself, through the creation in 1968 of the Virginia Commission of the Arts and Humanities. The Commission is charged with the duty to "stimulate and encourage throughout the State public interest and participation in the arts and humanities..." It has been through the Commission that State governmental encouragement of cultural growth in the Commonwealth has largely been channelled.

The approaches to fostering the arts taken by states other than Virginia have been varied. While a great many states have arts and humanities commissions similar to Virginia's, some have engaged in more ambitious programs which include direct and indirect subsidies to performing groups and teaching institutions, creation of performing groups as state institutions, and the designation of already existing performing groups as "official," "state" entities. With the exception of the creation of the Virginia Museum, the occasional passage of a resolution of commendation for an artist or artistic group, and the occasional designation of a "poet laureate," Virginia has channelled its governmental support of the arts through the Virginia

Commission of the Arts and Humanities.

The Virginia Opera Association, a non-governmental opera company headquartered in Norfolk, opened its first season in the Commonwealth in 1974-1975. Beginning with its first efforts and continuing through the present, Virginia Opera Association has met with considerable success and critical acclaim. It was in reaction to these successes, and in an effort to encourage the continued prosperity of VOA and its service to the Commonwealth that Senate Joint Resolution No. 69 was introduced during the 1976 Session of the Virginia General Assembly. The resolution stated:

**SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 69**

Designating the Virginia Opera Association of Norfolk as the State Opera Company of Virginia.

WHEREAS, the Virginia Opera Association of Norfolk was organized in nineteen hundred seventy-four to bring operatic productions to the citizens of Norfolk; and

WHEREAS, since its beginning in nineteen hundred seventy-four, the quality of its productions has improved greatly and the length of its season has been extended; and

WHEREAS, this opera association has received critical acclaim and approbation both locally and nationally; and

WHEREAS, Miss Nancy Hanks, Chairman of the National Council on the Arts, on a recent visit to Richmond, complimented the citizens of Norfolk for making such a high quality opera company available to the citizens of this State; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Opera Association of Norfolk has inaugurated this year a program to provide public school children with an introduction to the beauty of operatic arias and the history of opera; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia Opera Association of Norfolk is designated and recognized as the State Opera Company of Virginia.

The Committee on Rules of the Virginia Senate carried SJR69 over from the 1976 Session to the 1977 Session for further study. In 1977 an amendment in the nature of a substitute for the original resolution was adopted by the Senate Committee on Rules and subsequently agreed to by both houses of the Assembly.

**COMMITTEE AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A**

## **SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 69**

Requesting the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council to study the role of the Virginia Opera Association as the State Opera Company of Virginia.

WHEREAS, since its organization in nineteen hundred seventy-four, the Virginia Opera Association has been successful in making operatic productions available to the citizens of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the high quality of its productions have fostered increased interest in opera among Virginians of all ages, many of whom would otherwise never have had an opportunity to see an opera performed; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Opera Association has inaugurated a program to provide the Commonwealth's school children with an introduction to the beauty of operatic music and the history of opera; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Opera Association has received critical acclaim both locally and nationally, and has been complemented by Miss Nancy Hanks, Chairman of the National Council on the Arts, for making opera of such high quality available to Virginia's people; and

WHEREAS the considerable services provided by and through the Virginia Opera Association not only provide invaluable cultural benefits to the citizens of this Commonwealth, but reflect favorably on and are a source of pride for all the people of Virginia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, the House of Delegates concurring, That considering the contributions and achievements of the Virginia Opera Association the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council is hereby requested to study the cultural benefit of the Virginia Opera Association on the citizens of the Commonwealth and to evaluate the current role and project the future role of the Commission of Arts and Humanities in this field.

Delegate J. Warren White, Jr., of Norfolk, a member of the VALC, was chosen to chair a VALC Committee chosen to conduct the study. The following were approved by the VALC as members of the study Committee: Mrs. Mary Albergotti and Mrs. Lilley Babalas of Norfolk; Mr. John Batte of Richmond; Mrs. Lee S. Cochran of Staunton; Mr. Warren B. Crocker of Hampton; Mrs. Elizabeth L. Dudley of Lynchburg; Senator James T. Edmunds of Kenbridge; Mrs. Sibyl Fishburne of Roanoke; Delegate Robert R. Gwathmey, III, of Mechanicsville; Mrs. Edythe Harrison of Norfolk; Delegate Joseph A. Johnson of Abingdon; Mrs. Nora O. Lamborne of Alexandria; Mrs. Heloise B. Levit of Richmond; Delegate Thomas W. Moss, Jr.; Ms. Carter Grandy Scott, and Senator Stanley C. Walker of Norfolk; and Senator Edward E. Willey and Mr. Edward J. Slipek, Jr., of Richmond.

The Committee held three public meetings, taking testimony from Mr. Jerry Haynie, Executive Director of the Virginia Commission of the Arts and Humanities; Messrs. Donald Miller and Allen E. Turner of the Cultural Laureate Foundation, Inc.; and Mrs. Jane G. Hench of the Northern

Virginia Chamber Orchestra. Not inconsiderable information was provided by the Committee members themselves. The Committee obtained additional materials through research conducted by staff.

## II. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the work of its study committee, the Council presents the following findings and recommendations:

The Council is of the opinion that the contributions of the Virginia Opera Association to the cultural life of the Commonwealth have been truly outstanding. Not only has the Association brought opera of a professional calibre to Virginia, but its activities have stimulated and encouraged many talented young singers to pursue careers in opera. Furthermore, the Virginia Opera Association has inaugurated an opera-in-the-schools program which is taking the spectacle and excitement of opera into the schools of many of Virginia's counties, exposing to opera many of the Commonwealth's young who would probably never, otherwise, have had the experience. The Council feels that the Virginia Opera Association should be commended for these attainments, in an effort to encourage and support its continued activities.

The Council does not, however, feel that designation of the Virginia Opera Association by the General Assembly as the State Opera Company of Virginia is appropriate. Furthermore, the Council finds that a study ought to be made of the Virginia Commission of the Arts and Humanities for the purpose of formulating recommendations for the strengthening and enhancement of the State's support of the arts in Virginia. Accordingly, the Council recommends that the General Assembly adopt the two resolutions attached as appendices to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward E. Lane, Chairman

L. Douglas Wilder, Vice-Chairman

George E. Allen, Jr.

Peter K. Babalas

Vincent F. Callahan, Jr.

Joseph V. Gartlan, Jr.

Jerry H. Geisler

Robert R. Gwathmey, III

C. Hardaway Marks

Lewis A. McMurrin, Jr.

Willard J. Moody

James M. Thomson

J. Warren White

Edward E. Willey

## APPENDIX I

### HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO.....

Congratulating the Virginia Opera Association.

WHEREAS, the Virginia Opera Association, having conducted its first season of performances in 1974-1975, has experienced considerable and widely recognized artistic success in the few years of its existence; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Opera Association has brought to the people of this Commonwealth operatic productions of the highest professional calibre, reflecting credit not only on themselves, but also upon Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Opera Association has brought the spectacle and music of opera into the schools of many of the counties of the Commonwealth, bringing to the young a cultural opportunity and experience which they might never have otherwise enjoyed; and

WHEREAS, the artistic excellence and civic involvement of the Virginia Opera Association have encouraged the pursuit of excellence not only in the field of opera, but in the associated performing arts as well; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly of Virginia commends the officers, staff, and personnel of the Virginia Opera Association on the brilliant contribution which they and their organization have made to the growth of the arts in the Commonwealth and for their pursuit of artistic excellence which can so well serve as a model for emulation, and which can delight and thrill so many in the process; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Virginia Opera Association is especially thanked by this body for the service which they have rendered through their opera-in-the-schools program; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates is hereby directed to prepare a copy of this resolution in a form suitable for presentation to the President of the Virginia Opera Association in token of the gratitude, congratulation, and hearty best wishes of the General Assembly and the people of Virginia.



## APPENDIX II

### HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO.....

Directing the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council to study the Virginia Commission of the Arts and Humanities.

WHEREAS, as the first century of America's history is largely the story of the struggle to wrest from nature the necessities of life; and

WHEREAS, as America's second century witnessed the country's growth into the world's greatest industrial power; and

WHEREAS, similarly, many have come to feel that America's third century will be a period of rapid expansion in the arts and humanities; and

WHEREAS, in nineteen hundred sixty-eight the General Assembly created the Virginia Commission of the Arts and Humanities to serve as the State agency responsible for supporting and encouraging the arts in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, it is in best interest of all the people of Virginia that the Virginia Commission of the Arts and Humanities be provided with the necessary legal, financial and personnel tools necessary to carry out its responsibilities effectively; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council is hereby directed to conduct a study of the Virginia Commission of the Arts and Humanities, its organization, powers, responsibilities and finding with the purpose of formulating recommendations aimed at so strengthening the Virginia Commission of the Arts and Humanities that it may more effectively carry out its increasingly vital tasks.

The Council shall report its findings to the Governor and General Assembly during the General Assembly's session in nineteen hundred seventy-nine.

