



# UTAH FESTIVAL SONGWRITER

**OPERA by CHILDREN**  
A UTAH FESTIVAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

*"As years have gone on, I've seen how much it (OBC) really helps the kids. It helps improve them in all areas of academics."*

- Scott Knight, 3rd Grade Teacher, South Jordan, Jordan



*"I so often feel like my students don't get to be integrated enough or don't get the same opportunities as their peers. I was hoping through this Opera that they would really feel a part of this school by getting to perform for them and also be able to get out of their shells and showcase their talents... The student body gave them a standing ovation"*

- Danalee Phelps, Life Skills Teacher, Mt Crest High, Cache



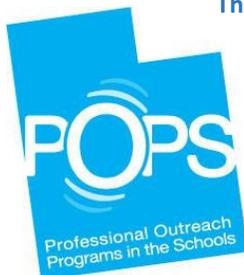
*"We finished our operas in February, and even now in May I still have students asking me, 'Can we pleaseeeeee do another opera?'"*

- Cassie Walker, Drama/Music Teacher K-5 (19 operas this year), Three Peaks, Iron



*"Opera by children has been one of my favorite ways to ensure a positive learning experience for all of my students. My students of all levels have opportunities to share their ideas and to participate in the entire process of something extraordinary. My particular favorite inclusion is that of my English language learners. This year I have a sweet refugee student from The Congo. He came into my class not knowing any English and throughout the year I have watched him blossom. He went from having no clue what we were doing, during the opera process, at the beginning of the year, to being able to fully participate and have a real role in the opera!"*

- Marianne Sorenson, 3rd Grade Teacher, Burch Creek, Weber





# UTAH FESTIVAL OPERA & MUSICAL THEATRE



## Teacher Comments on Arts Integrated Learning through OBC:

**Using Arts as Core:** "I think the most valuable part in using *Opera by Children* is how involved the students become in the arts. It uses both sides of the brain and is so powerful. The students were so excited to make their own music. I can't wait to see their scenery. The kids use math during their music, science and social studies during their story. I think that music always improves student behavior. When the music was played, different students remember making that part of the song."

"The most valuable part was the performance it is when everything came together. They learned a lot about drama, art and music (What's interesting is that now many former students are in junior high and many of them are taking classes in the arts). They learned about social studies. They were able to set aside differences to work together, because no one gets hurt (one of the guiding principles). Several students tried out and made it into the junior high musical. The opera was completely theirs. Several of them still watch their opera on DVD occasionally."

**Arts Integrated Learning & Student Achievement:** "I am now one of the biggest "cheerleaders" for *Opera by Children* and talk about it with anyone who will listen to my amazing

experience. I have a classroom in Spanish Fork, who came to me in the average range of academic abilities, mostly average middle class, caucasian students, with two who were severely below grade level in reading and one student who is an English Language Learner. I have watched my two lowest readers improve their reading skill significantly, and the rest of my class tested above grade level in reading which I attribute in part to our work on the Opera. I watched as EVERYONE was included in this process, from brainstorming ideas, to the design of student costumes. Everyone participated and incorporated in the process were many ELA Core Standards including: Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1 A & B, 2.2/2.3; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.4, 5, 6; Text Types & Purposes: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3; Craft and Structure: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.4; Fluency: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.2.4 and the list goes on."



"I teach 6th grade and this year is my third opera. Everyone gets an opportunity to speak. Ideas are written down and discussed in small groups and the larger group accepts what the smaller group comes up with. Integrating all the students especially during 'art day' is easily done. Those who need special education are accepted and readily invited in to help with this undertaking. Kids are so willing to help each other out if they are given the chance to. In this opera they traveled back in time. They were able to dig into social studies through researching what the different time periods looked like more than I would have been able to teach them through standard methods. They were able to tell a story through music and drama. The whole class was able to write a story that had meaning and were able to revise and edit in real life situations. They were able to share that story and receive immediate feedback from a live audience."

"*Opera by Children* has amazing value. Students are able to come together, who at first are completely not interested in this project and actually dreading

at the beginning to discovering characters, and developing a plot, doing research, expressing feelings and situations through written word and song. Then, designing scenes and backgrounds, taking what's in their head and pouring it out onto paper, and then transforming that paper into huge cardboard backdrops. They are able to act and think through situations and how they would respond, they are able to consider the audience through all of this and where they are and what they are seeing. In the end they go home with a DVD of this amazing production that they created. The opera process combines all the core and standards like no other project could have and taught them the way this opera did. This is something they will take with them their entire life. This isn't just learning, teaching or guiding. *Opera by Children* is an experience that I'm not willing to trade. It is really something every student should experience!"

"I teach gifted first grade and have guided students in writing 8 operas. I haven't ever had to work to include reluctant performers. Even students who didn't want to participate in the writing or creating music, eventually chose to join in through the TRAG model. Obvious core standards I utilized are in writing as we journal about the opera process, build our skills in opinion and explanatory writing and sequencing. We may touch on Research objectives if students are writing about a Social Studies or Science topic. We begin the opera early in the year and do some precursory research so we have enough knowledge about topics to use in our opera. We strengthen our speak and listening objectives, especially in collaboration, listening to others to build on their ideas, and rephrasing for clarity. OBC is one of the best activities I do for College/Career preparedness through collaboration, inclusion, and editing. The best objective for my growth is letting go of control in order to empower the students. It surprises me every time and I try to use it in more activities and subjects every year because it is so powerful to see how engaged the students are."

