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Arts & Entertainment

Opera Carolina

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in a week. We're shooting toward our July 14 board meeting, at which time we'll approve these steps. Those include ... potentially doing a show in concert or, as we did with "Figaro," totally reconceiving a physical production. It potentially means postponing a production to the following season.

We have already talked to our senior staff and they are in agreement that if they need to take a salary cut, they will. Which is admirable for all of them because we already implemented a salary freeze going into this year. That's evidence of the level of dedication that the staff has to making this the best company possible.

At the same time, we're looking at what we do in the community, how we interact

with the community, and how we engage people and build our public support through both donations and ticket sales.

People underestimate the power of their purchasing dollars. And that's our fault. In the performing arts' nonprofit sector, we're always talking about folks donating. But the opera generally will sell between 72 and 80 percent capacity for our performances. If we were to increase that on an aggregate to 90 percent, then all of a sudden that additional earned revenue goes right back in to support everything that we do.

We've got to encourage people to participate as audience members, as well as thinking about donating. They are equally important, and right now, I'd rather see somebody buy a \$50 ticket than donate \$50 and never show up. □

Arts Beat

A snapshot of arts-related news items

Duke Energy to sponsor Broadway Lights

Appropriately enough, Duke Energy will help the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center keep its lights on. The company has become the title sponsor of the Blumenthal's Broadway Lights Series, replacing Stanford Financial after that group's contract expired.

"We are pleased to partner with (the Blumenthal), which is a vital player in our cultural community and a significant source of economic development for our region," said Jim Rogers, president and CEO of Duke Energy. "Our sponsorship will also help to make these memorable experiences more accessible to everyone, especially families in need, through our contribution to the ticket scholarship program and support of the center's arts education and outreach programs."

The 2009-10 Broadway Lights Series, announced earlier this year, includes anticipated titles such as "A Chorus Line" (Sept. 29-Oct. 4), "Spring Awakening" (Feb. 2-7), "Jersey Boys" (March 31-April 11) and "Mary Poppins" (Aug. 26-Sept. 5). Visit www.blumenthalcenter.org for more information.

Roker in town to lend 'Hand'

Those who regularly wake up with Al Roker and the rest of the "Today" cast won't need a television set on Friday, June 26. That's because the celebrated weatherman will broadcast live from Spirit Square, 345 N. College St., Charlotte, as part of the show's eighth annual "Lend a Hand Today."

Roker spent the week in a Penske truck visiting four additional cities: Los Angeles; Portland, Ore.; Galveston, Texas; and Little Rock, Ark. The trip concludes in Charlotte, where Roker will "Lend A Hand" to a local charity, the identity of which is being kept under wraps until the morning of Roker's visit.

"Today" anchors Matt Lauer and Meredith Vieira will toss to Roker repeatedly during the morning telecast so he can introduce Charlotte's chosen charitable

organization and educate "Today" viewers on its efforts. Then Roker will present the charity with essential items. "Today" has raised more than \$1.8 million in donations from this year's "Lend A Hand" trip, the largest amount of contributions ever for the series. Following the Charlotte stop, viewers can log on to www.TODAYshow.com for more information on the charity and how they can help.

Celebrate 'America' at Hickory Grove

Hickory Grove Baptist Church will present "Celebrate America" on Sunday, June 28, at its main campus, 6050 Hickory Grove Road, Charlotte. The event honors the police, fire, medic and armed forces who serve the community and overseas. The program will feature Hickory Grove Baptist Church's choir and orchestra, a rescue vehicle show, a Red Cross blood drive, cookout and inflatable toys for the kids. The musical performances will begin at 3 and 7 p.m. in the Worship Center. This year's Joe B. Brown Community Service Award will go to the Hickory Grove Police Department and will be presented to the precinct's men and women at each performance. The blood drive runs from 1 to 6 p.m., while the rescue vehicle show begins at 4:30. For details, call 704-622-7202.

Sing the blues in Cornelius

The Charlotte Blues Society will host three summer fundraisers at Midtown Sundries Lake Norman, 18665 Harborside Drive, Cornelius, to benefit the society's programs. Featured acts at the Sunday concerts - which are scheduled for June 28, July 26 and Aug. 30 - are Robin Rogers, Lenny Federal, Ned Lucas, Matter of Fact, the Contagious Blues Band, the Thermatones and more. There is a suggested donation of \$10 at the door. Shows begin at 4 p.m. For more details, visit www.charlottebluessociety.org.

Send your arts news items to sean@huntersvilleherald.com.

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