



CHELSEA DISTRICT LIBRARY
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Chelsea District Library Brings Opera to Ages 9–99

On a gray November week with unseasonably low temperatures, Chelsea District Library (CDL) warmed the hearts and inspired the minds of residents young and old with visiting soprano, Joy Jan Jones. Jones is an independent, multi-genre singer, instrumentalist, writer, and producer. Based in New York City, she has performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Rockwood Music Hall, and New York Fashion Week 2018 and 2019. Jones was a featured performer in CDL's 2018 Music in the Air and is a performer and social media manager for Opera on Tap!, a not-for-profit organization that promotes opera as a viable living and progressive art form. This model of making opera accessible to non-musicians aligns perfectly with the library's mission of accessibility and celebration of the arts within our community.

Joy's visit began with an intimate solo performance in CDL's McKune Room, delighting her audience with selections from her repertoire including works by Debussy, Gounod, and Rachmaninov. Jones's warm, approachable personality and beautiful voice are a perfect introduction to the art of opera, while still delighting even the most seasoned music aficionados. Understanding schedule and accessibility challenges for some of our community members, CDL collaborated with Chelsea School District, United Methodist Retirement Communities, and Silver Maples of Chelsea to engage community members young and old beyond this library performance. Jones enjoyed three musically filled days in a variety of venues with rave reviews!

Beginning her tour at the Chelsea Retirement Communities and Silver Maples, Jones discussed her work since her last visit in 2018 and performed a few selections. Emily Meloche, Silver Maples Director of Programming and Wellness remarked, "Our residents were utterly charmed and entranced by Joy Jan Jones when she visited in the summer of 2018 and were thrilled to have her come back to visit this November. Joy's ease in front of a group and willingness to share her story couple wonderfully with her stunning soprano to make for a meaningful morning."

Encouraging the arts involves not only providing entertainment but education, and what better place to start than our local schools? Jones's personality and talent captivated

over 150 high school choir and orchestra students in Choir Director Steve Hinz's classrooms. Her conversation touched on topics including careers in the performance arts and the importance of building relationships and connecting with other artists. Hinz graciously accompanied Jones on piano, as she couldn't visit without singing for the students! Recounting the visit, Hinz remarked, "Our experience with her was tremendous! Joy was great at sparking their artistic interest with brilliant singing. Her story-telling about her professional success was humble but truly excited the students about their potential future careers. Even if students aren't heading into music, her description of any future careers brilliantly described how they must be open to a diverse and changing path. The students shared that they were 'Overjoyed' with her as a performer, speaker, and life-filled person!"

From the high school, Jones moved on to South Meadows Elementary School, where she engaged Sarah Radomski's 4th grade classroom in a scaled-down version of Opera on Tap's Playground Operas program. CDL Youth & Teen Librarian Jessica Zubik and Director Lori Coryell worked with students in the weeks leading up to Jones's visit to introduce opera—specifically, students learned what an opera is and how music can be used to show emotions and feelings, even if you don't understand the words. They learned the storyline of Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* and practiced a little Italian leading up to Jones's visit.

Jones worked with students to teach them the music and parts. Students were not expected to read sheet music. Instead, with Head of Technology Ron Andrews at the keyboard, and Jones singing, the students heard and repeated the verses. They caught on very quickly! After two classroom visits, this program culminated with a performance of a snippet of the *Elixir of Love*, where Jones performed the lead and was supported by a chorus of beautiful 4th grade voices. The students loved this unique opportunity and it was thoroughly embraced by South Meadows Elementary principal Stacie Battaglia, who noted, "We cannot thank Chelsea District Library enough for bringing Joy Jan Jones here to South Meadows; what an amazing opportunity for our students. Learning about and experiencing opera is something these kids will always remember. I know they loved being a part of it, and we loved watching them perform with Joy!"

Chelsea District Library thanks Chelsea School District, Silver Maples of Chelsea, and United Methodist Retirement Communities for collaborating to provide access to this unique musical opportunity in our community. For information about hosting future musical events, please contact Chelsea District Library Director, Lori Coryell, at 734-475-8732 x.206.

About Us: Chelsea District Library is a not for profit organization whose mission is engage, inspire, and equip through evolving services and resources. The Library currently serves 15,010 residents in the Chelsea area including the City of Chelsea plus Dexter, Lima, Lyndon and Sylvan townships. More than 16,000 individuals visit the Library each month. For more information visit chelseadistrictlibrary.org.

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