

Shoestring Opera was established in 2004 by cellist Anne Rankin with the mandate to introduce opera to children in school and family performances, creating original musical plays based on some of the themes and characters of a familiar opera, and featuring all the best music. It was imperative that the work be child-friendly, contemporary, and emphasize the joy of storytelling and the glory of the music. The children can see their own lives and experience reflected in the art form. The company is compact and travels light, the musical accompaniment is cello and piano; the performers are two singer-actors, baritone and soprano. As well as its first and best-loved opera, *The Shoestring Magic Flute*, other popular shows in the repertoire are *The Schoolyard Carmen*, about a rebellious immigrant child facing her first day in a Canadian school, which played a total of 61 performances in Toronto schools in its first season alone, and a fresh and funny adaptation of *Hansel and Gretel* for contemporary children, with cellist Anne Rankin featured as the Witch. The company was chosen to inaugurate children's programming at both Toronto Summer Music and The Isabel Bader Concert Hall in Kingston, has performed three times to sold-out audiences at the National Arts Centre, over 20 times at Toronto's Solar Stage Children's Theatre, with family appearances in Guelph, Oakville, Lakefield, Cambridge, Ottawa and elsewhere. Shoestring offers its shows in both bi-lingual and all English versions, has played to more than 80,000 school children through Prologue to the Performing Arts.