

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARTIST TRANSIT & HOUSING

OPERA America convened a group of experienced artists, artist managers, opera company administrative staff, and trustees in the fall of 2023 to discuss two important issues related to the working conditions for artists hired by opera companies. Many ideas were shared, and they are summarized in this document as a set of suggestions to consider when working with artists who are away from home for extended periods of time. It was agreed that good residential conditions and provisions for convenient transportation lead to better performances.

Not surprisingly, the biggest factor that contributed to positive experiences for artists, hosts, and producing organizations was meaningful communication. When the artist, the artist manager (if there is one), and the opera company have open and clear communication about what is being offered and what is needed in the areas of housing and transportation, things go much more smoothly and all parties benefit.

GENERAL ACCOMMODATIONS

- It is best to establish equitable practices where all artists — from composer, to leading artist, to chorister — are shown the same respect and care with regard to living conditions and transportation practices.
- When the contract is offered to an artist, it is advisable to share a clear statement of the company's policies regarding housing and transportation. E.g., will the artist be responsible for securing their own housing during the engagement? If so, will a stipend be provided? If a stipend is provided, what is the amount, and would it be possible to have it paid to the artist in advance or upon arrival, upon the presentation of appropriate confirming documentation?
- It is best if accommodations are private and quiet. An artist should have their own bedroom and bathroom in clean accommodations free of dust or mold.
- It is best to discuss in advance whether there are pets in the host housing. It is best to discuss in advance if the artist would be allowed to bring an emotional support animal.
- Ideally, accommodations would include a workspace with internet access that artists can use to continue their work and communication on current and future projects.
- Artists should have easy access to a kitchen with appropriate utensils to enable them to cook healthy meals for themselves.
- If artists are housed in a hotel, the company should ensure that the hotel is prepared for and happy to accommodate artists who may work late.
- If artists are accommodated in home housing, the hosts should be thoroughly introduced to the responsibilities associated with providing hospitality for artists, including respecting the need for privacy and quiet. A basic understanding of the expectations of all parties should be established in advance.
- In instances where both hotel and home housing options exist, artists can be asked for their preferences.
- Some companies expect artists to find their own housing. In all cases, the host company can make it easier for artists by providing contacts and/or affordable options so artists are not left on their own in cities with which they are unfamiliar. It would be most helpful if company staff verify the suitability of the accommodations that have been recommended.
- It is extremely helpful when artist accommodations are in close proximity to each other to make it easier to provide for shared transportation.
- Proximity to the rehearsal and/or performance space is very helpful, as is proximity to

- grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants, and other basic services.
- In all instances, company staff should communicate regularly with artists to ensure the housing is suitable and they are comfortable.

TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS

- It is wise to consult with artists about the preferred airlines, dates, times, and cities of origin and return before the company purchases airline tickets. It's also helpful to determine in advance whether it will be possible for the artist to upgrade the ticket at the artist's expense, and to share that information with the artist.
- It is helpful to determine in advance if the artist is bringing a car. Make special provisions if the artist will be providing local transportation for other artists on behalf of the company.
- If the company is renting a car on behalf of an artist, arrange for payment in advance either with the rental company or the artist.
- The ability for artists to utilize reliable mass transit to the rehearsal/performance venue is very helpful. A walkable distance is even better.
- If mass transit (or transit facilitated by the host company) is not readily available, consider providing one or more artists with a car to facilitate local transportation.
- If the artist is responsible for arranging their round-trip transportation for the engagement, reimbursement of the artist's travel expenses upon arrival is preferred.
- Another good option for compensation is a well-calculated flat fee, such as the federal government's (IRS) mileage calculator if the artist is driving.
- It is encouraged that companies consider policies that help artists cover significant miscellaneous expenses, including baggage fees, parking fees at company venues, and taxis and car services when they are required to fulfill their responsibilities for the company. If these are covered, please let the artist know when they can expect reimbursement.

QUESTIONS IN ADVANCE OF ARRIVAL

- Beyond asking about host housing or hotel preferences, many other questions can be answered in advance to the benefit of all. A company questionnaire may be appropriate:
 - Does the artist have allergies, food sensitivities, or special needs?
 - Will the artist bring children or family members to the city for the entire period of time or only occasionally? Do special provisions need to be made to accommodate children?
 - Does the artist speak other languages? Is the artist comfortable speaking in these languages with the media?
 - Is the artist interested in working with children in an educational setting?
 - Does the artist have a special interest in museums, historical sites, or other attractions?
 - Is a practice space needed during the artist's stay?
 - Are there any special schedule conflicts outside of the rehearsal/performance calendar?

QUESTIONS AFTER THE ENGAGEMENT

- The company might consider sending a questionnaire after the engagement to gain insight into the effectiveness of policies and procedures from the artist's perspective.

