



Measuring Up to Your Obligations

By Diana Hossack, Managing Director, OPERA America

If you are a responsible singer, you arrive at your contracting company with your role learned and ready for rehearsals. Companies want to be equally prepared for rehearsals. It's hard to imagine a singer arriving and a company not having determined the cuts or selected a set. The chaos and costs associated with this would be astronomical.

However, regarding costumes, this chaos is a regular occurrence. In fact, the number one request on OPERA America's Costume Listserve is: "Do you have measurements for such and such singer." This is not the company's lack of initiative; it is either because the company has not received your measurements, or because the measurements are inaccurate. It is your responsibility to provide this information, and there are short- and long-term ramifications for both parties if measurements are not provided in a timely fashion.

The amount of time and money spent to refit a costume — or worse procure a new one — is substantial. Multiply this by the number of cast members and productions per year, and this can seriously impact the costume budget. The money needs to come from somewhere, and though it may not affect you directly, it could be the difference between improvements to your costume, an added prop, or an additional marketing ad for the production. If the size changes are significant — due to a pregnancy, for example — it may even alter the artistic direction of the entire production.

From your standpoint, you will certainly not endear yourself to the costume, production, and artistic departments. Depending on the situation, addressing your costume challenges may affect the department's ability to finish another artist's costume(s). (Another person to whom you will not ingratiate yourself.) The time available for you to work with your costume may be reduced. Your costume may change altogether, and may not be as beautiful or becoming as the original costume was to be, due to the last-minute nature of this situation.

Needless to say, these short-term results may result in long-range damage to your future relationship with the company.

So, why then do singers so frequently abuse this obligation?

Vanity?

Well, the costume director — and the company — will know your measurements soon enough.

continued on page 3

Measuring Up to Your Obligations (continued from front cover)

Hopeful plans?

Are you planning on losing weight before you arrive? Well, give the company your measurements now and send the updated measurements as soon as your dreams come true.

Manager didn't send them?

Not an excuse. It is your responsibility to follow up with your manager to make sure all your business transactions are completed in a timely manner.

Don't know how to take measurements?

OPERA America has the solution. OPERA America's Technical/Production Committee — with input from the Costume Listserve subscribers — has created a standardized measurement form. Below you will find instructions, and you may photocopy the attached form, or download it from OPERA America's Web site (www.operaamerica.org).

You should have your measurements taken on an annual basis, and more frequently if you are experiencing a size change. Have a professional — the costume coordinator from your most recent company, the costume shop of a university, or a local tailor — take the measurements. Once you have them, fax the completed chart (or have your manager fax it) to all companies with which you have upcoming engagements. Make sure you keep an updated copy with you and that your manager has a copy as well. To eliminate confusion, discard the previous charts.

You may think this seems a small issue, but to the contrary, it has been an animated discussion topic among artistic administrators and artist managers, technical/production professionals, and costume experts. Companies have even considered charging the singer for excessive alterations caused by a singer's (or manager's) lack of communication. You know your role measure for measure. Make sure you size up in every other way, and take your measurements. ♦

Costume Measurement Chart*

Opera America www.operaamerica.org

Name: Last _____ First _____

Gender: Female Male

Height _____	Suit/Dress _____	Bra _____
Weight _____	Shirt _____	Hat _____
Shoe Size _____	Trouser _____	Allergies _____

A _____ Head Circumference

B _____ Base of Neck

C _____ Full Chest

_____ Ribcage/Underbust

D _____ Waist

_____ High Hips

E _____ Fulllest Hips/Low Hip at ____" below waist

F-Z _____ Inseam

G-H _____ Outseam to Below Knee

G-Z _____ Outseam to Floor

_____ Biceps

_____ Thigh

_____ Below Knee

J-K _____ CB Nape to Shoulder

K-L-M _____ Shoulder to Wrist (elbow bent)

Q-R _____ Shoulder to Shoulder Front

S-K _____ Shoulder to Shoulder Back

O-P _____ Front Nape to Waist

O-Z _____ Front Nape to Floor

J-N _____ Back Nape to Waist

J-Z _____ Back Nape to Floor

Notes

Measurements taken by

* This form should be filled out by a professional trained in taking proper measurements. NE0304