

# Medicine Show

TAKE YOUR SEAT FOR DOC OPERA, THE ANNUAL REVUE PUT ON BY CWRU MEDICAL STUDENTS WHO SPOOF LIFE IN THEIR SCHOOL THROUGH SONG AND DANCE.



SHOWTIME: BORROWING FROM BIZET'S *CARMEN*, THE CAST PERFORMS AN OPERATIC PLEA CALLED "PLEASE HOLD THE DOOR."

BY CHRISTINE MCBURNEY

Before practicing medicine, some CWRU medical students practiced their mambo during *Doc Opera XVI: MedTV!*, the annual all-medical-school revue not for medicinal purposes only.

What began sixteen years ago as a creative outlet has grown into a multimedia extravaganza and fund raiser. In 1985, Charles Goldberg, a self-proclaimed frustrated musician, invited other med students to put on a show. Dr. Goldberg (MED '89) is thrilled about *Doc Opera's* longevity. The show could happen only at CWRU, says the San Franciscan. "[Our] med students were always a little different, and *Doc Opera* was a way to showcase people who had lives outside of medicine."

In Cleveland's Masonic Auditorium last March, audience members studied their programs before the show like opera patrons reading the libretto. Instead of plot, they learned about the medical inside jokes they were about to be privy to.

Also included was a note from the show's directors, the class of 2003's Emeka Ofobike Jr. (CWR '99), Leslie Kernisan, and Gus Theodos (CWR '99). Borrowing the title of a famous cartoon, they wrote that the real meaning behind *Doc Opera* is to answer the "eternal question first asked by Bugs Bunny: 'What's opera, Doc?'"

In planning since the previous June, *Doc Opera* began rehearsals in January, when seventeen skit writers and five choreographers started the behind-the-scenes work. This year's show saw a cast of sixty students and fourteen faculty singing, dancing, and performing in twenty-eight numbers

and skits; a twenty-five-piece band playing throughout the evening; and an eighteen-member production crew. If "opera" is the plural of the Latin, "opus," which means service, labor, or a work, then the students have answered Bugs's question.

*Doc Opera's* musical numbers included lyrics that were adapted from a variety of musical styles, while the skits ranged from esoterica to bathroom humor. The show began with a video presentation of skits and faux commercials. One in particular had the audience erupting into

applause. The camera zooms in on an Asian student drinking a bottle of beer. He leaps from his chair into a martial arts pose. Cut to black. The title appears: *Winking Lizard, Barking Spider*. Referring to the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, students were showing their reverence for two nearby watering holes.


Moving on to live performance, in the category of musical theater, instead of Sondheim's "Comedy Tonight," it was "Anatomy Tonight." Rather than "La Vie Boheme," from *Rent*, it was "Case SOM," for School of Medicine. "Please Hold the Door" was an operatic plea to a tune from Bizet's *Carmen* that begged students to hold open the school doors for those who find themselves without their ID cards.

Pop-music spoofs included "Loans" ("I'm gonna pay forever"), to the tune of "Fame," and "Gunner" (med school lingo for an aggressive overachiever), to the tune of Creed's "Higher" ("Can my grades go higher?"). The student a cappella singing group, Docappella, performed "Cilia," to the tune of Simon and Garfunkel's "Cecilia." Inside one large costume representing cilia, the group swayed back and forth while singing, "Cilia, you clean out my nose, you're sweeping my trachea daily."

The *pièce de résistance* was "Who Let the Docs Out?" While the band played the Baha Men's "Who Let the Dogs Out," fourteen faculty followed Mr. Ofobike onto the stage, sat down on folding chairs, then began escaping from the constraints of their white coats while singing the chorus.

After the show, the cast, crew, and audience headed to University Circle for a party at the Uptowne Grille. Patricia Kao ('01) was holding a drink in one hand and her rib cage in the other. Dr. Kao, who choreographed six pieces and performed in ten, worried that she might have overdone it. She rehearsed about twenty-five hours a week for seven weeks. How did she find the time? "Fourth years have electives all year," she said. Dr. Kao, who studied dance, used to dream about being a dancer. "It's not a stable job," she lamented.

Some participants waited a year for their time in the spotlight. Ramani Balu ('04) saw *Doc Opera* last year while visiting CWRU. "I was blown away. I couldn't wait to participate." Sara Laskey ('04) said she didn't know if the show would come together, especially when, during rehearsal two days prior to opening night, she observed first years quizzing each other for an upcoming exam. "This is a group of people used to working hard and getting it right," she said. She also noted the larger lessons the cast experienced. "[*Doc Opera*] is a way to learn to work together—beyond wards and classrooms—that will make us better at what we're going to do. It's so hard, the stuff you confront. Being able to cultivate a sense of humor is critical."

Mireille Boutry, assistant professor of pediatrics at the School of Medicine, found entertainment as well as edification in *Doc Opera*. "It gets better every year and sheds light on my students. That makes me appreciate them even more." 

A former theater critic for *InTheater* magazine, Christine McBurney thinks *Doc Opera* is one of the hottest acts in town.

A portion of the proceeds from the 920 tickets sold went to Providence House. A total of \$1,840 was donated to the Cleveland charity that provides a safe haven for children in trouble. To buy a video cassette of *Doc Opera*, call 216/368-5871.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOEL HAUSERMAN



THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT: TOP, A SCENE FROM "CHEATED," TO THE TUNE OF MICHAEL JACKSON'S "BEAT IT"; MIDDLE, SONDHEIM'S "COMEDY TONIGHT" IS TRANSFORMED INTO "ANATOMY TONIGHT"; BOTTOM, THE ALL-MEDICAL-SCHOOL BAND