

Mark Schubin's Baseball-Opera Chronology

- 1849:** 1st connection between baseball and opera: Fans of American actor Edwin Forrest, who is playing Macbeth in New York, hire thugs from among ballplayers at Elysian Fields in Hoboken, New Jersey (1st famous ball field) to disrupt performances of British actor William Macready, also playing Macbeth in New York at what had been Astor Opera House. Deadly riot ensues; Macready is rescued by ex-Astor Opera House impresario Edward Fry, who later (1880) invents electronic home entertainment by listening to live opera by phone.
- 1870:** Tony Pastor's Opera House in New York has baseball team (covered by *The New York Times*).
- 1875:** *San Francisco Chronicle* reports on that city's opera-house baseball team.
- 1881:** Dartmouth College opera group performs to raise money for college's baseball team.
- 1884:** Three telegraph operators, J. U. Rust, E. W. Morgan, and A. H. Stewart, come up with idea to transmit live games. One telegrapher plays from ball park, second receives and announces, third moves cards with players' names around backdrop. Starting in Nashville's 900-seat Masonic Theater, they soon move to 2,500-seat Grand Opera House, beginning half-century of remote baseball game viewing at opera houses nationwide.
- 1886:** DeGiv'e's Opera House in Atlanta tries twist on the telegraphic idea. Using Western Union to telegraph plays, they lay out ball field on stage, hire boys, dress them in uniforms, and have them reproduce announced plays. Rust, Morgan, and Stewart move to Detroit Opera House, where grand perspective scenery of stage's ball field is hailed in press, and "there came a storm of applause, just such as is heard on a veritable ball field."
- 1888:** Baseball's most famous poem, "Casey at the Bat," is first recited in performance of Johann Strauss opera *Prince Methusalem* by DeWolf Hopper, who will later have his own opera company and will perform "Casey" a reported 40,000 times (he will claim only 10,000). What is probably 1st baseball opera, *Angela, or the Umpire's Revenge*, premieres; John Philip Sousa scored it; among its tunes are "He stands in the box with the ball in his hands," "The umpire and the dude," and "An umpire I, who ne'er say die." *The New York World* becomes 1st newspaper to adopt the live, telegraphic, game-reproduction idea, will be joined by many other newspapers.
- 1894:** Samuel Crowder installs "Little Men" baseball-game reproduction system at Richmond's opera house, Mozart Academy of Music, soon adopted at opera houses in 7 more cities. Female fan quoted in *Richmond Times* saying, "Why they bow just as sweetly as 'real live men' when applauded." At Ford's Opera House in Baltimore, Compton Electric Base Ball Game Reproducer sends fans into frenzy as local team beats New York Giants.
- 1895:** Comic opera *The Mormons* features baseball aria, "Who would doubt that I'm a man?"
- 1900:** Opera-composer John Philip Sousa plays first baseball game in France on July 4 at Paris World's Fair.
- 1909:** "Operatic edition" of song "The National Game" is published.
- 1910:** *New York Times* headline "Opera Ball Team Trounces Boston"
- 1911:** Outfielder Ty Cobb opens in *The College Widow* at Taylor Opera House, Newark, New Jersey.
- 1912:** Song "Baseball vs. Opera" is published.
- 1914:** Providence Opera House installs Coleman Life-Like Scoreboard to show baseball games.
- 1919:** "Black Sox" scandal begins at New York's Ansonia Hotel, home of many in baseball & opera.
- 1920:** Pitcher Bob Lemon (then six weeks old) is introduced to baseball at Redlands, California opera house (reported by him in his 1976 Baseball Hall of Fame induction speech).
- 1923:** *Aida* performed at Polo Grounds baseball field; idea spreads to other ball parks in U.S. & Canada.
- 1926:** George Jean Nathan in *The American Mercury* writes, "Opera in English is, in the main, just about as sensible a plea as baseball in Italian."
- 1930:** *Aida* performed at Montreal Stadium; 1988 *Aida* at Expos Stadium has one-performance audience of 44,000.
- 1931:** *Arizona Daily Star* sponsors free World Series viewing on Play-O-Graph at Tuscon Opera House.
- 1935:** In Marx Brothers' *A Night at the Opera*, overture to opera *Il trovatore* segues into "Take Me Out to the Ball Game;" ballpark activity at opera house ensues. "Opera Under the Stars" begins at Detroit's Navin Field.
- 1947:** *The Fighting Phillie Phanatic* operetta by Rod Johnston
- 1951:** 1st performance of the score of William Schumann's opera *The Mighty Casey*
- 1954:** *The Mighty Casey* opera by William Schumann (later 1st president of Lincoln Center) is published.
- 1981:** Rusty Magee's *1919: a Baseball Opera* (actually a musical) performed.
- 1986:** Long-time manager of Yankee Stadium becomes long-time manager of Metropolitan Opera House.
- 1989:** Glimmerglass Opera in Cooperstown (home of Baseball Hall of Fame) presents *The Mighty Casey*.
- 2004:** Opera baritone Robert Merrill (who had his own baseball uniform) dies watching World Series on TV.
- 2007:** Staged scenes of *The Summer King* opera by Daniel Sonenberg performed. *Cooperstown* opera by Sasha Matson & Mark Miller premieres. San Francisco Opera begins "Opera in the Ballpark" simulcasts at AT&T Park.
- 2008:** Washington National Opera begins "Opera in the Outfield" simulcasts at Nationals Park.
- 2010:** *Shadowball* opera by Julian Joseph premieres. 32,000 attend *Aida* simulcast at AT&T Park.