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# PRESS RELEASE

## Echoes of One of America's Oldest Opera Houses Can Still Be Heard Today

*Visitors to the Puccini Bar at the Inn on Bourbon can experience the splendor of a bygone era*

**New Orleans, October 8, 2009:** New Orleans, universally considered to be the birthplace of jazz, has had a rich, long standing history of musical heritage and traditions but perhaps less known is the fact that New Orleans was America's first city of opera and continued to reign as the Opera Capital of North America throughout the Nineteenth Century. The first documented opera performance in the city was Ernest Grétry's *Sylvain* staged on May 22, 1796 while George Washington was still president of the United States. Each year since with few exceptions, the city has continued to operate theatres offering full operatic seasons to patrons. But no theatre was as grand or splendid as the Old French Opera House built in 1859 in the heart of the French Quarter which was the was primarily responsible for ushering in the Golden Age of Opera in New Orleans.

The Old French Opera House, one of the oldest opera houses in the United States, served as the cultural center of New Orleans Creole society for over 60 years playing host to Carnival balls, debuts, benefits, receptions, and concerts. Erected in 1859 at a cost of \$118,000, it was opened to the public on December 1, 1859. From 1859 until it burned in 1919, the French Opera House was not only the scene of hundreds of operas, but was the hub of the dwindling Creole society, the last refuge of the "creme-de-la-creme".

The opera house was one of the most famous masterpieces designed by noted architect James Gallier, architect of Gallier Hall and many other classic 18th century buildings. The great elliptical auditorium was beautifully arranged with a color scheme of red and white, and seated 1,800 persons in four tiers of seats. It was Greek revival in design, and its colonnaded front measured 166 feet on Bourbon Street and 187 feet on Toulouse Street. Its 80-foot high loft towered above all of the buildings of the French Quarter. In the loges of the opera house, there were screened boxes for pregnant ladies, ladies in mourning, and "ladies-of-the-evening" (elegantly dressed madams from nearby Storyville).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MORE

Today, visitors to New Orleans and local opera aficionados alike can still experience the grandeur of this bygone era at the very location where the Old French Opera House once existed on the corner of Toulouse and Bourbon Streets now occupied by The Inn on Bourbon. The hotel's Puccini Bar pays homage to the Old French Opera House both in its opulent décor and opera entertainment. The Inn on Bourbon has teamed up with local vocal trio Bon Operatit! and members of the New Orleans Opera Association to provide a variety of FREE Opera themed events throughout the year. Members of Bon Operatit! Jesse Nolan, Lauren Mouney Gisclair and Mary Penick Akin serve up a perfect pairing of both old and new opera and musical theatre hits that are sure to delight audiences while the New Orleans Opera Association presents its ever popular Opera On Tap program featuring a variety of young local and regional singers in a casual, 90-minute concerts of opera, Broadway and more to help promote its regular season lineup. An exhibit of artifacts from the Old French Opera House will also be displayed at the hotel during November 13-22 to coincide with National Opera Week thanks to the Historic New Orleans Collection.

Come join us for one of the following FREE events all taking place at the Inn on Bourbon's Puccini Bar:

**September 23, 2009**

Opera on Tap

**October 10, 2009**

*Bon Operatit!*

**November 4, 2009**

Opera on Tap

**November 13, 2009**

National Opera Week Kick-off with Bon Operatit!

**November 13-22, 2009**

National Opera Week

Old French Opera Artifacts on Display at the Hotel

**December 11, 2009**

Christmas Concert with *Bon Operatit!*

**January 6, 2010**

Opera on Tap

**January 23, 2010**

*Bon Operatit!*

**February 14, 2010**

Valentine's Day with *Bon Operatit!*

**March 3, 2010**

Opera on Tap

**March 20, 2010**

*Bon Operatit!*

**April 9, 2010**

French Quarter Festival Kick-off with *Bon Operatit!*

**April 30, 2010**

Jazz Fest Kick-off with *Bon Operatit!*

**May 28, 2010**

Celebrate the New Orleans Wine and Food Experience with *Bon Operatit!*

**June 18, 2010**

*Bon Operatit!*

**August 13, 2010**

*Bon Operatit!*

The Inn on Bourbon also offers an Opera House Romance package which is a perfect complement to the great lineup of Opera entertainment throughout the year. The package includes 2 nights in a Bourbon Street balcony, 4 breakfast vouchers to Bourbon Street Café, ½ dozen roses, a romantic carriage ride for 2, and a free Bon Operatit! CD if you book and attend one of the Bon Operatit! performances at the hotel. Members of Bon Operatit! will even work with those planning or celebrating a special occasion such as newlyweds, newly engaged, those planning a proposal, those celebrating a special anniversary, or other special events.

For more information on the Inn on Bourbon and their Opera House Romance package, visit [www.InnOnBourbon.com](http://www.InnOnBourbon.com). For more information about BonOperatit!, visit [www.BonOperatit.com](http://www.BonOperatit.com). For more information about Opera on Tap and the New Orleans Opera season, visit [www.NewOrleansOpera.org](http://www.NewOrleansOpera.org). For more information about the Historic New Orleans Collections, visit [www.hnoc.org](http://www.hnoc.org).

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