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Vancouver Opera gets standing ovation for social media initiatives

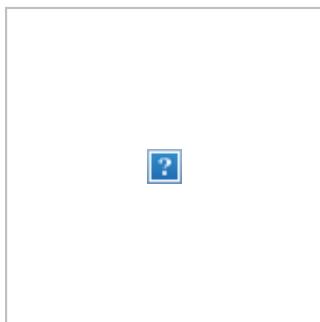
Gillian Shaw, Vancouver Sun

Published: Saturday, January 08, 2011

The Vancouver Opera never really dabbled in social media, it dived in headlong.

According to VO social media manager Ling Chan, it started with general director James Wright wanting the VO to start blogging in 2008.

That prompted Facebook, YouTube and Flickr accounts as well. And less than a year later, the VO was on Twitter.



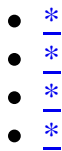
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Vancouver Opera director of production Terry Harper hosts a tour of the set of Lucia di Lammermoor for Twitter and Facebook fans.

Steve Bosch, Vancouver Sun

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Chan is diligent in keeping up the blog, a potential pitfall for organizations that can launch into social media with great fanfare, only to go silent and leave their blogs, Twitter streams and Facebook abandoned and outdated.

Chan posts three to five times a week and ensures all the VO's events are posted throughout the organization's social media sites, with behind-the-scenes looks, interviews and pre-show production photos and videos shared on Flickr and YouTube.

Chan isn't the only person blogging about the opera. The VO hosts blogger nights, inviting both opera newbies and fans to events to blog about the production, attending backstage tours and mingling with other opera goers.

The VO links to the bloggers' websites, sharing the limelight with them.

"We've had a rise of young faces at the opera," said Chan. "Doing our blogger night has helped a lot."

The VO's opera ninja live tweets from dress rehearsals, with one blogger invited to take on the role each production, posting updates on Twitter at www.twitter.com/operaninja.

"It gives a preview and gets people excited about the opera," said Chan.

This season the VO is trying out QR codes -- bar codes that can be scanned using a smart-phone to reveal information and special offers.

"It is slow to start," Chan said of QR codes, which are only beginning to be recognized as more businesses and organizations add them to posters and ads. "They're on our posters, at bus shelters and on our blog.

"We've gotten a lot of people scanning it. We put video clips up, behind-the-scenes stuff, and time-limited promo offers, they could be up to half-off tickets."

The opera also hosts Twitter and Facebook fan nights, at which social media fans are invited to arrive early for a show. They can get background pre-show chats with members of the production team or backstage tours.

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