

SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES

FISCAL YEAR 2001

FACTS AND FIGURES

Save America's Treasures

Dollar Amount of NEA Funding for Save America's Treasures Grants: \$1,330,000

Save America's Treasures was launched in 1998 as a program of the White House Millennium Council, National Park Service, National Trust for Historic Preservation, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services to protect the nation's threatened cultural resources. Congressional appropriations for the program began in FY 2000, the same year that the National Endowment for the Arts joined the partnership. In FY 2001, the NEA provided five grants to nonprofit organizations for the preservation or conservation of nationally significant collections of cultural artifacts—such as documents, works of art, maps, and journals—that illuminate the history and culture of the United States.



Judith Blegen as Sophie and Tatiana Troyanos as Octavian in the Metropolitan Opera's performance of Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*, which was originally broadcast in 1982. Both the audio and video tapes were restored to broadcast quality for an encore presentation on PBS almost two decades later. Photo by Winnie Klotz

METROPOLITAN OPERA PRESERVES RADIO AND TELEVISION ARCHIVES DATING BACK TO 1931

The Metropolitan Opera in New York City, the country's largest opera company, has an unprecedented collection of radio and television recordings in its archives, going back as far as 1931. To ensure the survival of this important part of American culture, the Met has undertaken a seven-year preservation/restoration project to maintain and copy those tapes that are still in good condition, and restore those that are deteriorating. The Metropolitan Opera Association, Inc. was awarded a Save America's Treasures grant of \$200,000 in FY 2001 to support the restoration and preservation project.

The archives' collections are a repository of the voices of three generations of great artists, such as Marian Anderson, Beverly Sills, Richard Tucker, and Robert Merrill. With more than 1,200 broadcasts, the radio archives is an unmatched documentation of live opera performance in America. Likewise, there are video and audio tapes for each of 90 telecasts since 1977.

Although the Met has maintained the collections in special climate-controlled storage facilities, some of material is deteriorating and needs immediate attention to retain these important pieces of American musical history. This grant will allow for the systematic preservation of these materials using the finest technology available. The radio tapes for 1987-95, for example, are especially at risk due to the chemical formula used at the time to create magnetic tape. The Met is having the tapes cleaned and copied onto new reel-to-reel tapes and compact disc to preserve these works. Both reel-to-reel and CDs are expected to last for 50 years.

The television tapes are being evaluated as to which need to be restored, transferred to digital tape, or maintained. The tapes will then be documented in a professional library database by a qualified librarian. Through this preservation and restoration project, some of the definitive performances of the 20th century will be saved for future generations.