



Lend Me a Tenor? Lyric Opera Performer Gives Saint Viator Students a Behind-the-Scenes Look at Life in the Company

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Saint Viator English teacher Patrick Neville (right) introduces James Kryshak, a tenor with the Lyric Opera, to the freshmen in the Querbes Scholars Program. (Photo by Chris Santucci '12)

James Kryshak, a tenor with the Lyric Opera, came calling last week at Saint Viator High School, ready to make his pitch that opera as an art form can be fun and expressive --- and not stuffy.

He came at the invitation of Saint Viator faculty members as they prepared freshmen in the Fr. Louis Querbes Scholars Program before they headed to the Lyric Opera's performance of "Carmen."

The Querbes Scholars Program is in its first full year and is designed to offer additional challenges and enrichment opportunities to its motivated honors students.

The scholars' immersion into the world of opera came just a few months after their first field trip, which examined a completely different

topic: nuclear physics at Argonne National Laboratory.

Freshman Jeff Madden of Arlington Heights conceded that while he has never been to an opera, he thought this field trip might be more up his alley.

"I'm looking forward to it," Madden said. "I think I'm going to like it more than nuclear physics."

Kryshak is a member of the Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center, which is the professional artist-development program for Lyric. In Carmen, Kryshak is the understudy for Le Remendado, one of the smugglers.

This is his first year in the Lyric company, and he performed in six of its eight shows.

Freshman Matthew Yoder of Buffalo Grove asked about the size of an opera cast (typically more than 100) and how big the audiences are (90 percent sold out).

His questions led Kryshak to describe all that goes into mounting a full-scale opera, as well as sharing details from his training that includes operatic performance, voice lessons and coaching, as well as language and acting training.

But he also advised students to take in the total experience, from the people watching to the scene changers, who have to move the larger than life sets in less than two minutes.

"Opera is a timeless art form," Kryshak said, "that continues to hold up as a cultural presence because it includes so many forms of the performing arts from the singing and dancing, to the visual arts in its set design and theater aspects with the acting."