

## EARTH NEWS

A new study shows male sparrows flap their wings violently to avoid battling other males over territory or mates. Read about this and more in Earthweek.

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Opera Southwest singers Elizabeth Hott, left, as the character "Katrani," and Cammy Cook as "Marisol," perform for APS students at the National Hispanic Cultural Center. The two characters depict monarch butterflies who return to Mexico.

# Opera

## FOR THE YOUNG



APS students peer into the orchestra pit the National Hispanic Cultural Center

Rudolfo Anaya students go to the opera — some for the first time — and learn a lot

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Of the Journal

**L**ike many of his classmates at Rudolfo Anaya Elementary School, 8-year-old Xavier Lente wasn't sure what to expect from a visit to an Opera Southwest production.

"This will be my first time going to an opera," the fourth-grade student said a day before he and 350 of his classmates attended a performance of "A Way Home" at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque.

Xavier wasn't alone. Several of his classmates also said the field trip would mark their first time at an opera.

Leaders at Opera Southwest have learned that some preparation helps young students get the most from the novel cultural experience.

The day before their visit, several hundred third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students crowded into the gym at Rudolfo Anaya to hear a presentation about opera — and butterflies.

Opera Southwest board member Sandra Purrington started her presentation with some basics.

"An opera is a play with music," she said. "Our opera is about people and monarch butterflies."

The one-hour opera was written with young audiences in mind. It tells the story of 17-year-old Gracie, who makes her first voyage to Mexico to bury her mother's ashes in her mother's hometown of Michoacán.

Michoacán also is the winter destination of monarch butterflies that migrate from throughout North America. The spirit of Gracie's mother makes the same voyage as the butterfly.

The opera draws a parallel between the migration of butterflies and Gracie's return to her ancestral homeland.

"The people of Michoacán believe that the butterflies are the souls of their ancestors," said Julius Kaplan, another Opera Southwest board member.

Purrington and Kaplan introduce their young audience to many new words: cycle, migration, metamorphosis, aria and baritone.

"I learned today that (opera singers) don't use a microphone," Xavier said after the presentation. "They have to have a loud voice."

Rudolfo Anaya students

## EDUCATION

# Opera gives students cultural enhancement

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were among more than 2,000 Albuquerque Public School students, ages 7-17, who attended four performances of "A Way Home" on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1.

"A Way Home," written by Texas composer Ethan Frederick Greene, features

five singers, a 13-piece orchestra, "and all the bells and whistles of theater," said David Bartholomew, stage director and producer of Opera Southwest.

The opera was first performed for young audiences in Albuquerque in 2012. Opera Southwest leaders were astonished

by the attentiveness of young audiences who saw the performance last year, Bartholomew said last week.

"The kids were just riveted from the curtain up," he said. "It was encouraging for us to see that kind of attention paid to what was happening on the stage. These kids were really quite tuned in to the

whole thing."

Rudolfo Anaya Elementary School draws students from low-income families who may not have an opportunity to attend cultural events such as an opera, said Gionna Jaramillo, the school's principal. Some 96 percent of the school's students qualify for free or

reduced-cost meals, she said. "I think it's an invaluable experience," she said. Beyond learning about music and vocabulary, attending

an opera introduces students to "the whole experience of getting dressed up and going someplace special."