

**Media Advisory: 6th Age Puppet Opera Company from the
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
at the University of Southern Maine
to perform at National American Society on Aging conference in Philadelphia
on Friday, March 11, from 2-3 p.m. in Ballroom Salon III**



Intrigued by the idea of “puppet” and “opera” appearing in the same title, a group of creative, curious people who, by their own admission, were more brave than savvy, have come together to create and stage their first complete opera—Henry Purcell’s seventeenth-century tragedy *Dido and Aeneas*. The performance is scheduled for Friday, March 11, from 2-3 p.m. at the conference. All the performers are 65 years of age or older and members of the Sixth-Age Puppet Opera Company from the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (or OLLI) at the University of Southern Maine in Portland.

The Opera Company is the brainchild of OLLI member, Keith Sherburne, of Scarborough, Maine, who has always wanted to create puppets and decided to take a chance when he saw a puppet production of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* in Prague a number of years ago. He started the company at OLLI when he found “industrious, creative souls” to try it with him. The group, which includes a retired teacher, nurse, accountant, and librarian; came together more than a year ago to study the 1689 opera; create the 3 foot puppets; make the scenery; and practice, practice, practice. The puppet artists operate their characters that include dueling divas, death-defying choristers, and even a singing snake, to a recorded version of the English-language opera.

The group held their “world premier” in October, have been featured on Public Radio, and are pleased to be performing at the American Society on Aging in Philadelphia. Samuel Johnson called opera “an irrational entertainment.” In short, “hellzapoppin’” at the Sixth-Age Puppet Opera Company!

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The performers (both the puppets and puppet artists) will be available for interviews following their performance.



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