

SMALL BUSINESS

Bracelets form a ring cycle of her own creation

Operas depicted in beads and charms popular online here and abroad

By KERRY FELTNER

The Metropolitan Opera shop did not have it. Nothing there could commemorate the performance that Rochester natives Cindy and Andrew Battisti had experienced when they attended the 2008 Met production of “Die Walkure.”

“There was nothing celebrating why we had gone there,” Cindy says. So when she returned to Rochester, she decided to create her own memento.

Battisti, 45, launched Opera Bracelets in 2010, creating jewelry that captures the story of an opera in linear fashion. Andrew, her husband, is the sales and marketing manager of the business.

“(I) started out with a few elements ..., and then it sort of spiraled into representing the whole story. And then I realized, after some thought, that the idea of representing the whole story with charms and beads could be applied to any opera or work of literature,” Cindy says.

Opera Bracelets has more than 75 bracelets in its collection and now adds six to 10 bracelets per year.

This is the second business venture for Cindy Battisti. She previously owned Dyzines Decorative Painting, which closed some three years ago. Health concerns and a tough economy contributed to the closure of that enterprise.

Battisti believes Opera Bracelets’ jewelry stands out by telling stories through design.

“I just want it to have meaning beyond ... ‘That’s a pretty bracelet,’” she says. “Even when I used to be a painter ..., it’s all about symbolizing something. I enjoy that search: How do I tell that story (using) this method?”

To create an original bracelet, Battisti studies the libretto of an opera, and her

PROFILE

Opera Bracelets



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Cindy Battisti, formerly a decorative painter, now creates bracelets representing operas and operatic characters.

research can take 40 to 60 hours. Purchasers get pictorial charts detailing the significance of each bead.

Opera Bracelets has attracted a mix of customers, which surprises Battisti. Instead of the older, affluent female clientele she had been expecting, she found that the market for her bracelets is among teenagers and elderly women.

In addition to its main collection of bracelets priced at \$88.88 each, Opera Bracelets has an “Inspired by” collection that takes a character of the production and uses charms to symbolize the opera. Those items cost \$44.44.

“Some of our customers are young singing students. ... They don’t have the funds to stretch to this all the time,” Battisti says. “(The ‘Inspired by’ line) gives them something.”

Revenue for the business is split nearly evenly between the “Inspired by” line and the main collection.

While Battisti has showcased her bracelets at events in Rochester, online consumers are the major clientele. Five to 10 per-

cent of sales are to customers overseas. So far, the largest retail sale has been \$1,000.

Opera Bracelets markets its products by syncing with opera companies’ productions. “Live in HD” performances transmitted from the Met to movie theaters offer the Battistis the ability to use social media during intermissions to host discussions and to present their products to opera fans.

A bracelet representing Wagner’s “Ring Cycle” of four operas, among the most popular operas at the Met since its 2010-11 and 2011-12 seasons, sold out at the Met Opera Shop. The store will showcase another opera bracelet in September, with charms that represent six new productions of the 2013-14 season.

“(It has come) full circle like a bracelet,” says Andrew Battisti.

Kerry Feltner is a Rochester Business Journal intern.

Small Business is a weekly feature focusing on entrepreneurs. Send suggestions for future Small Business stories to Associate Editor Smriti Jacob at sjacob@rbj.net.