

[KIDS' STUFF]

Culture Cats

Will singing stuffed animals turn kids on to opera?

ASPENITE JEANNIE KADOW attributes her lifelong passion for opera to early exposure. "It was always on," the five-time novelist and former marketing executive says of her aria-filled youth.

That's definitely not the case for today's kids. "Arts are being stripped out of education," Kadow laments. "Opera and classical music are losing their social context." To remedy that, Kadow recently launched two series of picture books: *Composer Cats* and *Opera Mice*. Intended for 3- to 8-year-olds, both will be 13-book series rolled out over time, and each new title, written by Kadow, is either a "musical mystery where the great composers are cats" or "one of the world's most beloved operas performed by a troupe of theatrical mice."

Each book comes with a music-playing cat or aria-singing mouse. Mozart Cat, who plays "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" when squeezed and is pictured here, debuts with his corresponding book at Thanksgiving. Kadow recruited renowned conductor James Conlon to narrate the accompanying CD. A full multimedia platform is in the works, including a television series, iPad apps, and interactive pages on the website (mohartcat.com) where children can write

their own "Mozart mysteries" and play opera-themed games.

Kadow believes the whole project traces to Aspen: "I'm a Paepckean at heart," she says, alluding to Aspen's original culture boosters, Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke. "That's why I formed the company here. It stands for everything I think this town is about." —MM



Little Indys

For adventurous boys, it's a fantasy come true: Travel to the African bush, go on safaris, fly in prop planes, and meet the natives. Twin brothers Gannon and Wyatt Wheeler have spent the last two years doing just that. And with the help of their mother, Patti Wheeler, and local writer Keith Hemstreet, the Aspen High School sophomores have turned their experiences into a multi-platform educational brand that includes an award-winning book, *Travels with Gannon and Wyatt: Botswana*, a website (travelswithgannonandwyatt.com) and possibly a television series. The boys weren't yet born when Indiana Jones made archeological swashbuckling a career goal for kids, but they're doing his legacy right. —MM



THE ART OF SKIING

ASPEN'S GREAT MIND-VERSUS-BODY DEBATE—to make hop turns on the mountain or go gallery-hopping in town?—comes closer to getting resolved this winter. Cutting-edge art has become another on-mountain amenity.

The Aspen Series, by Italian-born photographer Walter Niedermayr, reflects directly on the ski experience, capturing downhill activity from a variety of striking perspectives. The 42 images, panoramic landscapes made on the four local ski areas, will be exhibited through the season at the Aspen Skiing Company's ticket booths and on-mountain restaurants. Niedermayr's expansive shot of the trek up Highland Bowl, featured on season passes, gives skiers something to consider as they ride the lifts.

Swedish painter Mamma Andersson, who has a solo exhibition at the Aspen Art Museum, will also be a presence on the slopes. Her 2003 piece "Sleeping Standing Up," inspired by the local mountain scenery, is featured on a limited edition lift ticket.

Rounding out the sensual experience is a piece by Susan Philipsz, a current finalist for England's Turner Prize. Working with the Art Museum, the Scottish-born artist has created an audio installation to be placed under Snowmass's Trestle Bridge, between the Big Burn and Sheer Bliss lifts. The sound of skis schussing—and the grating noise of snowboards—has more artful competition this winter. —Stewart Oksenhorn