

JEREMIAH'S VANISHING NEW YORK

A.K.A. THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS:
A BITTERLY NOSTALGIC LOOK AT A CITY IN THE PROCESS OF GOING EXTINCT

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 2008

Amato Opera

With all the recent destruction on the Bowery, I figured it was time to revisit the [Amato Opera](#) house and I went to see La Boheme. I saw the show years ago and not much has changed. Now they have a screen above the stage with English supertitles, a great improvement. That's about it. A lady who might be Ukrainian still sells home-made brownies at the snack bar. A stack of old records and VHS tapes sits for sale nearby. Otherwise, the place is the same.



Founded in 1948 by husband and wife [Tony and Sally Amato](#), they moved to the Bowery in 1964. For years their tenement theater stood between a parking lot and CBGB's, both now gone. If there is one reason to grieve for that parking lot it's because that was where you could see (and hear) the chorus practicing before performances on temperate afternoons.

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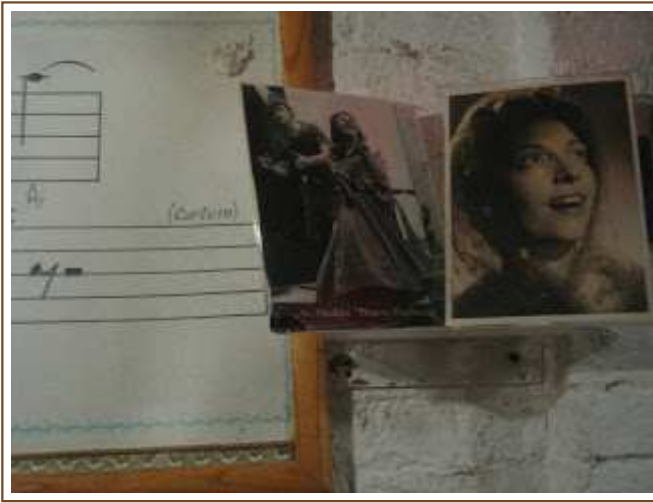
JEREMIAH MOSS

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Another loss, greater than that parking lot, in 2000, [Sally Amato passed away](#), leaving Tony to carry on the tradition of big opera in a small space. She no longer makes her cameo appearance as the silent waiter in La Boheme, but Tony still comes out on stage during each performance's final intermission to conduct a raffle (a buck a ticket) and say a few words.



He's almost 90 years old and I don't know what will happen to the opera house when he is gone. Hopefully, there are heirs who aren't interested in selling the place to developers, who care deeply about continuing the Amatos' work. But who knows? It is best these days to go and enjoy, before it's too late.

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POSTED BY JEREMIAH MOSS AT 11:14 AM

LABELS: [BOWERY](#), [EAST VILLAGE](#), [LOWER EAST SIDE](#)

2 COMMENTS:

Anonymous said...

On January 5, 2009, Tony Amato announced that he sold 319 Bowery and that this, the 61st season, will be the last. Now there are only a few dozen performances remaining before an era comes to an end.

JANUARY 12, 2009 AT 12:20 AM



njkidd55 said...

Oh, this brings back memories. I sang in the chorus of the Amato Opera in 1975. CBGB's was in its heyday at the time. We did Gounod's Faust that season. I remember standing out in front of the building getting ready to march in for the soldiers chorus. The CBGB's crowd with their paper-clip pierced ears would eye us up in our hand-me-down (from the Met) 12th century German Burghers costumes, each of us trying to decide who was weirder.

Cosmo commented on [W 28th Street View 2010 Today](#): "Great documentation. Thank you."

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