

*Expanding the future of Opera
through development, mentoring and advancement of volunteer service*

Opera Volunteers INTERNATIONAL

www.OperaVolunteers.org



The Opera Volunteer Voice

Summer 2014
Vol. 38, Number 2

The official quarterly
newsletter of
**Opera Volunteers
International**

Next issue:
September

What's Inside This Issue:

President's Message	2
Joe Specter on Austin Lyric Opera	3
Partners in Excellence	4-5
2014 Grant Recipients	6-7
Projects of Special Merit	8
Opera Guild of University of Alabama	9
Regional News	10-11

The Conference Issue: Audiences Reimagined

Suppose They Gave an Opera and Nobody Came?

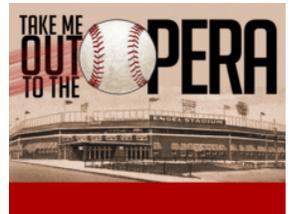
..... Luckily for humanity that is not the case. And yet, the world of opera performance and delivery is changing so rapidly that remaining the same can mean sure extinction for any arts group! Resistance is futile. Only by embracing change and technology can opera continue. Only by transforming itself can opera continue to transform us, the audience and participants.

Opera is no longer entrenched in the opera house. It can be found in the movie theater via live transmission, on computer screens, in baseball stadiums and many other unlikely places. In San Francisco we will be looking at this and sharing the secrets of how and where to reach new audiences in a digital age.

One thing is certain. In this, the most collaborative of the arts, coordinated effort is vital. This includes an enthusiastic, organized volunteer base. Especially in challenging times volunteers are essential as workers, as representatives, as fans, promoters, customers and donors, for it is people that make the difference.

In this issue we celebrate the achievements of the opera volunteer groups and individuals throughout North America, which we will honor in San Francisco. We look at Austin Lyric Opera's miraculous resurrection. We welcome new member **Opera Guild at the University of Alabama** to OVI and describe a group of students from rural Georgia experiencing their very first opera thanks to OVI grant recipient **Peach State Opera**.

For opera volunteers and for opera companies opportunities abound. Just as you are there for your local opera company and the institution of opera we at OVI are here for you. In an unpredictable world we can be counted on to teach, coach, inform and inspire. Rick Greenman



Opera Volunteers International is a nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to connecting and bringing together volunteers who support opera companies in cities and local communities throughout the United States and Canada.

Find us on the internet at www.OperaVolunteers.org



Dear OVI members and friends,

OVI is excited to partner with OPERA America for **Opera Conference 2014: Audiences**

Reimagined co-hosted by **San Francisco Opera**. In San Francisco, the epicenter of technology, Opera Conference 2014 will showcase innovative use of technology to engage opera audiences, donors, subscribers, volunteers, and the community itself. Broadening and diversifying the appeal of opera is critical to its ongoing success and “going digital” is vital in today’s world. We will learn from leading experts how to “reboot” our opera experience in order to reimagine the future of opera!

Since OVI’s first 1972 conference in Seattle to this 33rd Conference, we’ve gathered in 27 cities across North America, partnering with local opera volunteer groups, enjoying operas and learning new techniques to support this art form we love. We have made new friends and renewed friendships with volunteers and professionals across the opera world.

In this our 8th collaboration with OPERA America, we are thrilled to be part of this year’s Conference. Special thanks to **Marc Scorca** and OPERA America for this opportunity, and to **San Francisco Opera** and the **San Francisco Opera Guild** for all they have done to make this another very special time to relax, recharge and reimagine our opera experience. Our own **Susan Malott** and **Belinda Steyer** are doing double duty for both OVI and San Francisco Opera Guild! OVI’s **Sheila McNeill** has done a splendid job working with OPERA America on the Volunteer Track sessions and planning our special events during Conference. Past President, BRAVO awardee and Lifetime member **Don Dagenais** will lead a fabulous session on “Rebooting your Volunteer Organization”, and Roundtable discussions will allow members to share ideas and experiences for greater success for all.

At the annual OVI Awards dinner, we look forward to honoring our 2014 Partners in Excellence and the Projects of Special Merit awardees, all strong partnerships between opera companies, volunteers, and the communities in which we live.

Once again, OVI’s Silent Auction will offer a fun way to take home some goodies as a great reminder of the best the opera world has to offer, with proceeds benefitting OVI’s Matching Grants and other programs of value to our member organizations.

Best wishes for an outstanding Conference experience!

Rhonda Sweeney, President



OPERA America's Marc Scorca on Opera's New Reality

Following is the opening of an article Marc penned on May 20 regarding San Diego Opera and the current state of the art.

The startling announcement in March that **San Diego Opera** planned to cease operations – and the ongoing effort to save the company – sparked an intense national debate about opera’s capacity to thrive in the 21st century. The prospect of losing another large opera company only months after **New York City Opera** declared bankruptcy was particularly unsettling, especially when many opera companies have embraced new artistic and financial strategies to navigate through more challenging circumstances than those facing **San Diego Opera**. We were delighted to learn at the end of last week that effective teamwork inspired the opera company board – under new leadership – to rescind the decision to close the company. Many challenges lay ahead, but it is wonderful to know **San Diego Opera** will celebrate its 50th anniversary season after all.

An importance lesson can be learned: Simply conducting business as usual is no longer sustainable. Opera companies of all sizes have faced severe financial circumstances, actual and projected. Many have demonstrated strategic agility and embraced innovation to ensure their continued cultural service at high artistic standards.

The rest of this fascinating article can be found in its entirety on the OVI website.

How to Contact Our Membership Vice-President:

Changed your address? Moving soon?
Make sure you let Susan Malott know at:
membership@operavolunteers.org
(713) 522-1669

Opera must remake itself despite the pain

by Joe Specter, General Manager of Austin Lyric Opera



As general director of a nonprofit American opera company, it gives me tremendous pause to learn of the fall of companies as illustrious as **New York City Opera**, **Baltimore Opera** — or any of the other companies that have dropped the curtain for the last time. Opera companies are important to the community: They deliver great art, enrich our children's education through meaningful engagement programs and employ hundreds of people each year—singers, orchestra members, stagehands, staff — to the benefit of their local economies.

There is no question that our art form is at an inflection point where paradigms ranging from audience development to fundraising to how we actually deliver the art need to be studied and challenged. But the fact is that dozens of opera companies around the country are having success. And they're doing it by remaking themselves a little bit, every day.

Austin Lyric Opera's turnaround story offers perhaps the best counterpoint to the downfall of **San Diego Opera** and **New York City Opera**. It's a story of how a community rose to the challenge to keep the art form they love alive and, on a larger scale, how cultural institutions must be responsive and responsible stewards of a community's trust.

Three years ago, ALO faced many of the same challenges and decisions San Diego faces now. In the spring of 2011, we were a \$4 million a year organization with \$14,000 cash in the bank and \$2 million in debt. But our financial challenges were a symptom, not the cause, of ALO's problems.

We chose operas that did not resonate with the broader community. We did a poor job of giving people reasons to be excited about what we were putting on the stage. We compromised on quality. We did not handle our books well. We treated our patrons poorly. We lost subscribers.

The reason ALO did not close was because — in spite of all of our challenges — we had not run out of passion, will, endurance, artists, faith or commitment. Our board, our guild, our donors, our subscribers and our fans would not let ALO die. Under our then-new board president, **Ernest Auerbach**, and thanks to the faithful support of the Austin community, our board looked at the hard facts and took dramatic action.

We spun off our community music school into its own separate nonprofit. We reduced our number of performances. We pivoted to more traditional repertoire. We reduced our staff. And we sold our building.

These were painful, gut-wrenching moves for the company, but they enabled us to focus completely on our responsibility to bring great art for the benefit of Austin.

Three years later, we are an organization operating without any debt. We have a re-energized board. Our subscriber base has grown by 33 percent. But most importantly, we are bringing great opera performances to our community and providing programs for arts education at little or no cost, serving as the resource to Austin that we must be.

If this seems like an opportunistic move to promote our organization in the face of the failure of a peer in the field, you are absolutely right. We would be falling down on the job if we did not do everything we could to turn the challenges of our field to our company's advantage.

What we now know is that it takes more than \$15 million to build an opera company. In fact, \$15 million — or even \$20 or \$30 million — is the last thing you need. Because before you need money, you need a community of people with a passion for opera; the courage, the will, and the endurance to have an opera company; the artists to create the opera; and the faith and commitment to make it work no matter what. When all of that comes together, opera doesn't just survive, it thrives.

The reason ALO did not close was because — in spite of all of our challenges — we had not run out of passion, will, endurance, artists, faith or commitment.

2013 Partners in Excellence Awardees

Nancy Ellen Coleman Paula Damore Donald and Susan Drake
Annette and Gary Nall Donna White Angel

The prestigious Opera Volunteers International *Partners in Excellence Award* program recognizes individuals who have given extraordinary volunteer service to opera in their communities or groups observing special anniversaries.

The awardees of this once-in-a-lifetime honor will be acknowledged at the Opera Volunteers International Awards Dinner at Opera Conference 2014 in San Francisco this month.

Donna White Angel Capitol City Opera Company Volunteers



Donna Angel, who founded **Capitol City Opera Company (CCOC)** with her late husband Harry in 1983, was nominated by the CCOC Board of Directors to recognize her exceptional dedication and singular vision in creating an opera company whose sole purpose is to champion Atlanta's local opera talent. Under Donna's leadership **Capitol City Opera Company** has provided a training ground for Atlanta's young opera singers with opportunities for them to learn, perform and refine vocal and acting skills on a professional level.

No one can touch the heart and soul of a singer like Donna Angel. She casts the right singer in the right role and helps them make it their own. Audiences come away with their own hearts and souls touched. With her continuing volunteer, selfless spirit, she not only brings opera to a city and opportunity to singers, she changes lives.

Nancy Ellen Coleman Nashville Opera Guild



Nancy has been a tireless supporter of the Nashville Opera since its founding in 1997. She has a deep commitment to the **Nashville Opera Guild** which provides invaluable support for the Nashville Opera Association. Nancy has served the Guild in many facets, not only as President for two years, but also in chairing the Guild's premier fundraiser, as well as willingly performing more mundane, but essential tasks such as entering data and ensuring mailings go out. But Nancy's support of the She has opened her hearth and home to the Opera for twenty years, housing young artists and also hosting auctioned

dinners serving fresh produce from her farm, which is renowned for both the quality of the fare and the engaging hosts. A testament to her dedication was the comment, "**Nancy Coleman** is a professional who is cherished by the **Nashville Opera Guild**, and who operates with diplomacy and sound response."

Paula Damore

Austin Lyric Opera Guild



Paula has been a member of the **Austin Lyric Opera Guild** since the late '90s. During that time, she was guild President and steered the Guild through a defining period, culminating in what is now a stronger organization with the ability to better nurture and promote **Austin Lyric Opera**. She volunteers for whatever tasks need to be done, from licking stamps to manning a phone to encourage season ticket renewals. For the past three years Paula has spearheaded the Pre-Opera Gala Dinners and has been responsible for reviving the glamour and excitement of the evening. This results in consistently sold out events which attract a new opera audience. Paula seeks no recognition for the time and effort she has devoted to the Guild. Her reward seems to be in experiencing the joy of opera and of seeing newcomers come to their own awareness of this wonderful art form.

Donald and Susan Drake

Glimmerglass Opera Guild



Don and Sue joined the **Glimmerglass Opera Guild** in 1993 and very soon after were elected to the Guild Board. During their years of service they have given more than 2,500 hours of service. They were at nearly every performance as volunteer ushers, with thousands of hours given above their Guild participation. They have been major participants in helping to host the well-attended cast parties, which are open to the public as well as the performers. In addition to these ongoing projects, **Donald Drake** served as **Glimmerglass Opera Guild** President for three terms.

Susan Drake served as Interim Guild Board Secretary and as a member of the Guild's Nominating Committee. The impact of their dedication and leadership throughout the years cannot be measured simply in terms of hours or titles. During their years of volunteer service to Glimmerglass, the roles Don and Sue played have been crucial to the success of the Guild and contributed greatly to the company.

Annette and Garry Nall

Amarillo Opera Bravo



Garry and Annette Nall are a dynamic duo committed to furthering the mission of **Amarillo Opera** through their presence at each performance and any activity related to the opera. They support **Amarillo Opera** with their time, talents and funds.

Annette and Garry serve as hospitality co-chairs of Bravo and hospitality is the primary mission of Bravo. They are at the heart of this mission with their organization of all hospitality activities for the twenty member Bravo support group. They also coordinate other Bravo activities including providing food for cast welcome parties, and cookies for receptions for off main stage performances. Garry and Annette usher for the student performances and volunteer to cover any other jobs that need to be done for the operas. Annette has been on the working committee for the fundraising ball since its inception three years ago. Their generosity and unfailing kindness is a symbol of what Bravo is about.

Grant Recipients 2014

SHREVEPORT OPERA \$2,000

Educational Programming and Outreach to Children

The grant will provide 4 performances of *OPERATIZERS* for middle and high school students at local underserved schools.

OPERATIZERS is a musical theater and opera concert featuring young professional singers teaching valuable lessons on themes such as bullying, environmental conservation, acceptance and kindness. Prior to performances members of the Shreveport-Bossier Opera Guild will discuss volunteer opportunities. Music and study guides will be sent to schools in advance. Teacher evaluations and statistical data will be compiled after each performance.

The students will not only have an experience with opera and musical theater that they would not have otherwise had, but will also learn about becoming involved with opera as a volunteer.

ARTISTI AFFAMATI (Chattanooga, TN) \$2,000 - Opera In The Stadium , *A Mighty Casey*

Grant will cover sound team, sets, youth performance, royalties and principal singers. Chorus, musicians, concessions, greeters, ushers, publicity staff and administrators will all be volunteers. 80 volunteers will be involved in this production. Many local voice teachers, students and children will be involved in this show and will be a first step toward inspiring the next generation to study and love opera.

They have brought opera out of the theaters and into unusual spaces to encourage new audiences to attend. This project, *A MIGHTY CASEY*, by William Schuman, will take place inside the historic Engel Stadium. The opera revolves around the baseball team from fictional Mudville and their star player Casey.

Artisti Affamati's goal is to keep opera alive in a town without an opera company, have two full productions a year and expand the support base by attracting new audiences.

The long term goal is to grow large enough to present grand operas, expand to 4 or 5 opera a season and become a training group for up and coming singers. The opera in the stadium project is a step toward the goals outlined.

PEACH STATE OPERA (Lawrenceville GA) - \$1,290 Social Media Strategy and Implementation

Grant will help fund a consultant to design, plan and implement new information systems, and to train volunteer staff and produce quarterly newsletters.

Peach State Opera Company is a five year old touring opera company which brings opera to underserved audiences in Georgia. This project is to help PSO reach more audiences by upgrading and enhancing its use of social media. A consultant will help revamp our Facebook posts to reach more young audience members using their preferred media. The consultant will provide us with a plan for consistent communication which produces results.

In order to reach more audiences, we must reach out to more people through all means available, especially social media and electronic communication. We must develop a broader presence and by receiving this grant, will be able to create a dynamic presence which will enhance our audience base in many communities. This broadening of audience base serves our mission of bringing live professional opera to communities that do not have an opera company. By using volunteers to do all of our administration, we save dollars that allows us to bring affordable opera to these small communities.

MARBLE CITY OPERA (Knoxville, TN) - \$2,000 . Brand New Opera Project

Grant money will be used for all aspects of the production. About 15 volunteers will be used for the production

BRAND NEW OPERA PROJECT is dedicated to producing fresh new works biennially. We will include one world premier and one southeastern premier by composer **Larry Dellinger**, *AMELIA* and *TALK TO ME LIKE THE RAIN*. MCO is an innovative, grassroots organization dedicated to cultivating a new audience for opera by performing chamber works in unique and intimate spaces. **BRAND NEW OPERA PROJECT** is integral to the mission to premier brand new or rarely performed works. The project offers all involved a unique opportunity to work closely with the composer. Volunteers will be given the opportunity to be on the cutting edge of the creation and production of a new work.

YOUNG PATRONESSES OF THE OPERA (Miami) - \$2,000 Opera Voice Competition

Grant money will be used toward Judges, photo, accompanist, marketing, stage management, awards.

The date of the Opera Voice Competition is mid April 2015 in downtown Miami. The semifinals will include approximately 35 singers. The competition was founded in 1972. Approximately 20-30 YPO committee volunteers will be trained for the event. Additionally, we will have 6 Junior Opera Guild volunteer members who will assist in ushering. Training will be done through a series of educational and training meetings starting summer 2014. The competition is held every two years. The committee is responsible for creating and reviewing applications and reviewing recent audiotapes from which the semi-finalists are selected. We are also responsible for the judges. Winners are selected through two days of live auditions. Committee members assist in helping with accommodations and are available for any help the finalists need.

YPO has assisted many young singers as they pursue their careers by awarding prize monies. They may apply this prize to undergraduate or graduate educations or other expenses incurred in the pursuit of an operatic vocal career. Singers may enter as a Jr. young artist or a Sr. young artist. In 1988 we joined forces with the **Florida Grand Opera** and it has become a sought after competition. This competition is needed in helping develop young singers to become great opera singers. Many have had Metropolitan Opera careers and gone on to become singers internationally.

Matching Grants

Group members of Opera Volunteers International can apply for a matching grant of up to \$2,000.

Projects that incorporate volunteerism in stimulating the interest in opera and its growth in their community may be candidates for such a grant.

If your member opera support group has a great project ready to go, but needs additional funds to make it happen, OVI might be able to help. Find more information on the OVI website or contact Mary Earl at 423-842-3340.

OVI GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINES ARE JANUARY 1 and APRIL 1 OF EACH YEAR

On-line volunteer training available:**The Mission Driven Volunteer - Embracing the New Philosophy: "Adhocracy" as a Governance Model**

This seminar from Higher Logic, the social networking, collaboration and communications company, takes a long, hard look at the traditional committee-driven model of volunteer organizations. Co-authored and presented by Peggy Hoffman, CAE, President, Mariner Management & Marketing,, and Elizabeth Weaver Engel, CEO & Chief Strategist, Spark Consulting

To view the audio/visual presentation, download the PowerPoint or access The Mission Driven Volunteer whitepaper, visit: <http://www.higherlogic.com/resources/learning-series/mission-driven-volunteer>.

Projects of Special Merit 2014

The Projects of Special Merit program gives support groups a way to celebrate a successful project, to share it with the opera volunteer community and receive recognition for an idea well conceived and executed. OVI invites application for annual review of projects that were volunteer-created and implemented in support of their opera companies. Entries have described successful endeavors in a variety of areas including education, audience development, fundraising, membership, volunteer training and artist support services. Accepted projects are honored and presented with an award certificate, invited to participate at an OVI Focus Meeting and/or Conference and often included in one or more OVI publications. The Projects of Special Merit chair can provide more information and application material. The following have been chosen to receive Projects of Special Merit awards at the Opera Volunteers International/Opera America conference in San Francisco in June 2014. We're so proud to have such wonderful organizations as part of our membership. Their work in support of opera and education in their communities is outstanding.

BRAVO, Amarillo Opera support group

Cast Care

Each season Amarillo Opera brings in guest artists, directors, stage managers, and conductors for both the fall and spring opera productions. Cast Care volunteers greet out of town guests with a welcome party on the day of their arrival which allows the cast to meet one another, the opera sponsors, and members of the Board of Trustees and the Guild in an informal setting. In addition volunteers provide lodging for some guests and serve meals to the whole cast and crew the last four rehearsal nights prior to the performance. The project lasts from three weeks before the beginning of the rehearsals to the last dress rehearsal twice a year.

Shreveport-Bossier Opera Guild

Les Boutiques de Noel

In its 39th year Shreveport-Bossier Opera Guild fundraiser has delighted savvy shoppers with this annual one-stop shopping extravaganza. Guild members and volunteers handle many duties. Over 150 booths offer an array of items from jewelry to toys to clothes to food. This year they raised \$130,000.

Performing Arts League of Chattanooga TN

High School Vocal Competition

The Vocal Competition project, in its 19th year, awards and fosters the study of vocal performance and encourages young people to pursue classical singing as a career by providing them with an opportunity to compete with their peers, perform in front of a live audience, be judged and critiqued by a panel of unbiased professionals, and further their education in order to help launch their careers. One junior or senior student, male or female, from each high school or home school association in the area is eligible for the competition. Each must be recommended by his or her high school music teacher or private vocal instructor for at-large students. There is one winner and a first and second runner up, each receiving a monetary award. All contestants have opportunity to speak to the judges after the competition, which is open to the public

Up to 30 volunteers serve on committees ranging from administrative to fundraising. The project has awarded over \$30,000 since its inception.

**Gulf Region OVI Welcomes:
OPERA GUILD at
UNIVERSITY of ALABAMA**

OG@UA – THE OPERA GUILD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA – made its debut in November 2014 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. A group of fans of the University of Alabama’s Opera Theatre and its director **Dr. Paul Houghtaling** met to create an organization that could formally support the **UA Opera Theatre** and provide new opportunities for students in Dr. Houghtaling’s program in the University’s School of Music.



The Consul" 2014 — with Jen Stephenson, Andrew Nalley and Zyda Culpepper-Baldwin at Bryant-Jordan Hall. Photo: Dusty Compton

The new Guild quickly established its guiding purposes: to support student artists in the opera theatre program; to increase the number of ticket purchasers, donors and fans; to enhance the visibility of opera at UA, Tuscaloosa, and beyond; and to extend opera to diverse audiences through outreach and education.

Since the debut of this group, twenty “founding members” have worked tirelessly. In February, Guild members provided communication support in publicizing the upcoming performance of Gian Carlo Menotti’s *The Consul*. In March, the Guild held a reception to celebrate a sell-out opening night of The Consul in a newly renovated performance space on the University campus. The second performance brought special friends of opera Gloria and Bob Jackson from Atlanta; they documented the matinee with a series of excellent photos. In April Guild members served as greeters for “*One Night Only*”, a concert of popular and show tunes performed by the students. The concert drew another full house!

A gala “Music and Food from Around the World” is planned for September 26th under sponsorship of the **Opera Guild @ UA** and the **Alabama Museum of Natural History**. This event will benefit the School of Music’s Opera Theatre.

The founding board of OG@UA meets monthly in Tuscaloosa, AL. OVI visitors to Tuscaloosa are invited to contact OG@UA about joining us at a meeting or being greeted as fellow friends of opera. As a new group, the Guild has found OVI information to be very helpful; and we invite suggestions and “tips” from other opera volunteer organizations as we move toward our first anniversary next November.



Mary Earl, OVI Adm. VP presenting award to Suzanne Ahn, Chair Vocal Competition, Judith Hepplewhite, President Performing Arts League and Pat Starke, Chair Vocal Competition.



Performing Arts League at Opera at the Ballpark presented by Artisti Affamati with Pat Daniel and Martha Mackey.

Southwest Region

Stockton Opera Guild Awards \$3000 to Promising Local Vocalists



Tenor: Ricky Garcia
University of the Pacific



Lincoln High School winners
Jacqueline Sandar(left) and Leilani
Smith(right) with their accompanist
and coach Kimberly Watts-Willis



Congratulations to the San Francisco Opera Guild for an amazing 75 years of service to the arts and thank you for welcoming OVI to your home for the 2014 conference.

Southeast Region meets South Central - North Carolina Opera supporters visit Houston Grand Opera for World Premier

March 2014: **Richard and Donna Falvo** attended Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*, starring and wonderfully sung by **Elizabeth Futral** and **Chad Shelton**. "Send in the Clowns," was stunning and moving. A wonderful set, beautiful Sondheim prose and music directed expertly by **Eric Mear**. This was a special added event since the purpose for the trip was to see the world premier of *A Coffin in Egypt*



Timothy Myers, Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the North Carolina Opera with Frederica von Stade

based on the play by **Horton Foote**, music by **Ricky Ian Gordon** and libretto by **Leonard Folgia**. The Egypt in question is not in the mid-east but south of Houston. A story wonderful sung and acted by the incomparable **Frederica von Stade** as Myrtle Bledsoe, a ninety year old woman reliving the pains and joys of her life. The New York Times has described "Flicka" as she is known to the world, as "one of America's finest artists and singers". The mezzo-soprano has enriched the world of classical music for over three decades and was asked to come out of retirement to play the role. Many of us wondered who else could really carry off this difficult acting – singing role.

The other reason for our trip [including 20 or so from the North Carolinas Opera family] was the occasion that **Timothy Myers**, the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the **North Carolina Opera** [Members of OVI], was the conductor of this opera. Mr. Myers held the music's tempo to fit the singing and acting and moved the orchestra between various sub-themes and musical interpretations including a gospel choir. In addition, we were excited and we were most pleased to have spent time at an intimate reception with Flicka and Tim after the performance



Gulf Region Toccoa's First Opera

Toccoah (Cherokee for "beautiful") is a mere ninety miles northeast of Atlanta in the north Georgia mountains. Just days after a rare snow blanketed Georgia more than two hundred and fifty people ventured into the Shaefer Auditorium to experience "Cosi Fan Tutte" performed by **Peach State Opera**. Among those hardy souls were eighty students from Union County, who endured a two hour bus journey through the mountains and eagerly anticipated their first opera experience. Volunteers from Toccoa-Stephens County Chamber of Commerce, Currahee Arts Council and surrounding mountain communities were in abundance.

Union County's Alicia Covington arranged her choral ensemble's first opera experience on short notice. The students were excited and did not know what to expect. At intermission, a young fellow said, "I understand what they are singing. I understand what they are singing about." The young lady beside him related, "I was the first one to laugh. I knew that I would be in trouble for laughing; then, everyone was laughing. I was so glad."

The enthusiasm of those students after the performance had them rushing down to and onto the stage where they were given a happy reception by **Peach State Opera's** performers.

Everyone from **Wendi Bailey**, Toccoa-Stephens County Chamber of Commerce, **Vice Mayor Terry Carter**, to the lovely ladies who were taking tickets worked with **Peach State Opera** and its volunteers. A fantastic experience for all was followed up with an invitation from **Terry Carter** earlier today for their second opera. Definitely, that invitation was accepted without any reservation.



Southwest Region Opera League of Los Angeles hard at work

Past stats from president, **Judy Lieb** and statistics recorder, **Nina Haro** indicate that in 2009 **Opera League of Los Angeles** provided 28,481 hours of volunteer service. Of these, 21,673 were in direct service to **LA Opera** and visiting artists and the remainder were for League operations and events. Annually the **Opera League of Los Angeles** donates at least \$75,000 to LA Opera from their boutique, member dues and other fundraising activities. In addition, the Opera League donated \$100,000 to the Ring Cycle Friends of the Ring campaign, as well as an additional \$50,000 to assist the LA Opera with other projects.

South Central Region: STEPHANIE HELMS Opera in the Heights

Despite recent news of financial worries in the opera world, there are many small opera companies like **Opera in the Heights** (Houston), **Peach State Opera** (Georgia), **Marble City Opera** (Knoxville) -- OVI members all -- who are bringing affordable, live opera to our communities across the country. We love having them as OVI members and hope that our grants, recognition, and networking opportunities help to keep them viable in their communities!

Says Stephanie: "OH's volunteers are passionate about this company, and it would be impossible for an opera company with an annual budget of less than \$1 million to put on four shows a season without that level of engagement and commitment."



OH Executive Director:
Stephanie Helms

Opera Volunteers International

Focus Meeting in Omaha, Ne



attend a performance of
Rigoletto at **Opera Omaha**

Enjoy Focus Presentations, Welcome Reception at the Brandeis-Millard mansion, tour the lovely Durham Museum and visit the studio of renowned artist and stage designer, Jun Kaneko. Attend a Theatrical Production of *The Whipping Man*, OVI Board Meeting, strategic sessions and much more.

Save the Dates
October 16-19, 2014

Opera Volunteers International

PO Box 7032
Evanston, IL 60201-2284

Address Correction Requested

Send your guild news and photos to
Newsletter Editor and Publisher:

Rick Greenman

newsletter@operavolunteers.org

Find us on the internet at
www.OperaVolunteers.org