



## The Opera Volunteer Voice

### Back from San Francisco ...on to Omaha

Fall 2014  
Vol. 38, Number 3

The official quarterly  
newsletter of  
Opera Volunteers  
International  
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Next issue:  
January

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OVI members participating in Opera America's 2014 conference in San Francisco had an opportunity to interact with volunteers, and opera companies from across the nation as we *reimagined audiences*. In future issues or by electronic means we plan to share valuable tips regarding *rebooting your volunteer organization*, use of electronic communication & social media, and designing and implementing effective websites.

Below are some fun facts we learned at our backstage tour of San Francisco's historic War Memorial Opera House. Notes are by Toronto college student and OVI attendee, Poona Tran. (See our conference photos on page 5).

- Completed in 1932 for \$4 million by architects Arthur Brown and G. Albert Lansburgh.
- Art Deco and Beux Art style, using dutch gold (which is an alloy of copper/zinc).
- first San Francisco Opera *Tosca* - Seating - 3,250 people.
- Main curtain - 3,000 yards of fabric, 2,000 lbs. - Statues above the stage are life sized.
- Stage arch is an illusion. It looks taller than it is wide, but is actually wider than tall.
- Orchestra pit floor height can be adjusted depending on production.
- Pit is operated with hydraulics, visible from the costume area underneath the stage.
- Major earthquake damage in 1989 created the opportunity for much needed technical improvements.
- Backstage equipment has multiplied in effectiveness, but has diminished in size due to technology.
- Spray cheap vodka on costumes to keep them fresh between washes. (*Don't do this when driving*).
- It takes about 60 hours to make a wig of real hair. However, white wigs are made of yak hair.
- There is a dressing room off-stage for quick changes.
- There is a practice room electronically programmable to change the configuration of the acoustics.
- Rigging/Crew: Ship terms. Original stagehands were seamen with knowledge of pulleys and ropes.

### Matching Grants available to Member Groups

Group members of OVI 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 grant candidates. If your member opera 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 JAN 1 and APR 1

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](http://www.OperaVolunteers.org)



*"Try to remember the kind of September when life was slow and oh, so mellow.*

*Try to remember the kind of September when grass was green and grain was yellow."*

Music by Harvey Schmidt and lyrics by Tom Jones, from *The Fantasticks*

September is here already, and with it the end of summer and the beginning of fall, a month of transition! Summer is traditionally a time for rest, relaxation, and recharging. For many opera volunteers, however, summer opera festivals mean the busiest time of the year! Santa Fe and St. Louis come to mind as companies who have thrived in the summer and keep their Guild volunteers busy over this typically relaxed period. Even San Francisco, which has its main season in the fall, kept us busy in June at OPERA America's Conference 2014 with three wonderful summer season operas, while hosting over 700 attendees for interesting sessions, wonderful events, and of course the backdrop of that splendid city! OVI was well represented at the Conference, including our Silent Auction and Raffle raising over \$6500 for Grants and other projects, and well attended volunteerism sessions ranging from Social Media and Websites to Rebooting Volunteer Organizations! We had an outstanding awards dinner to recognize our newest Partners in Excellence and Projects of Special Merit awardees, alongside our Matching Grants recipients. It was wonderful to reconnect with so many longtime OVI members and to meet new volunteers across the USA and Canada!

Fall brings with it a renewed energy for traditional season opera companies, with opening night galas, dinners, and new productions! Volunteers return to their activities with opera education programs in the schools, opera boutiques, and artist hospitality. We look forward to experiencing the beauty of fall colors in heartland of North America, Omaha Nebraska, when we meet for a Focus meeting October 16-19. The arts are alive and well in Omaha, and our members will experience the best sights, sounds and tastes possible! We hope to see many of you there!

OVI's own renewal is well underway with the progression of our Strategic Plan. We have recommendations for growing our membership and financial capability, expanding our recognition for outstanding volunteers and volunteer projects, improving our communications with members and potential members, and updating our Mission and Objectives, all of which we will discuss at the Board meeting in Omaha. We will be tracking our progress over the 2014-2015 fiscal year and with you in this newsletter.

Warmest regards,

*Rhonda*

Rhonda Sweeney, President

#### OVI congratulates

**Opera San Antonio and  
Opera Guild of San Antonio**  
on their new home at the  
**Tobin Center for Performing Arts.**

Their premier season begins on September 23 with Tobias Picker's new opera, *The Fantastic Mr. Fox*. This has been a long time coming and we look forward to their successful future.



#### SAVE THE DATE:

May 6-9, Washington, D.C.

**OPERA  
CONFERENCE  
2015**

Icons from the Noun Project. Top: Martha Ormiston. idass



## FOCUS MEETING IN OMAHA, NEBRASKA

OCTOBER 16th THROUGH 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014

The Doubletree by Hilton Downtown Omaha will be our base of operation. The rooms are a real bargain - \$90 per person or \$100 for a couple. This includes a great breakfast buffet. The Doubletree has a shuttle that will meet you at the airport and return you to the airport when you leave. Make your reservations by calling 1-800-222-TREE or the internet at [doubletree.com](http://doubletree.com) using the group code OVI. Reservations must be made by September 16, 2014 12:00 AM. Ask about the shuttle when you make your reservation.

Thursday evening Opera Omaha Guild President, Mark Maser, will host a welcome reception at his lovely home – the Brandeis-Millard Mansion. This will be a chance for OVI Focus Meeting attendees to mingle with Opera Omaha Guild members and Opera Omaha Board of Directors members.

The OVI Board will meet on Friday morning, October 17, with general business, as well as a review of the work on the Strategic Plan, which kicked off following our Austin Focus Meeting in November. Lunch will be served.

**Friday night, October 17, Opera Omaha will perform “Rigoletto,”** a co-production with Atlanta Opera and Boston Lyric Opera. Opera favorite Samuel Ramey is returning to Omaha as Count Monterone and rising star Fabian Veloz sings the title role. Dinner before the opera will be at the Flatiron Café, one of Omaha’s premier restaurants. We are invited to the Anne Thorne Weaver Lounge during intermission for refreshment. Call 402.346.4398 ext.100 to purchase your opera tickets.

*Saturday morning we will visit the studio of Jun Kaneko, the Omaha artist who is internationally known not only for his ceramics, but for his design of stage sets and costumes for three operas. The first opera is the production of “Madama Butterfly” that San Francisco Opera did during the Opera America/OVI conference in June. The second was “The Magic Flute” that was co-produced by Opera Omaha, San Francisco Opera, Washington National Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Kansas City. The third opera is “Fidelio,” Beethoven’s only opera, commissioned by The Opera Company of Philadelphia in 2008.*

In the afternoon we are touring The Durham Museum, where beautiful architecture blends with memories of a time gone by. Making its home in one of Omaha’s most unique treasures, Union Station, The Durham Museum offers a fascinating look at the history of the region.

Saturday night, October 18, we will hop aboard “Ollie the Trolley” and head west to the Dundee neighborhood where we will stop at Mark’s Bistro for dinner. Back on “Ollie the Trolley” we will be whisked away to attend a play at the Omaha Community Playhouse, the largest community theatre in the nation. “The Whipping Man,” which premiered in New York in 2011 to great acclaim, is an extraordinary tale set in the post-Civil War South. “Ollie the Trolley” will deposit us back at the Doubletree and the end of our lovely weekend.

**Registration:** A registration form is attached. Please fill it out and mail, along with your check, to:

Opera Volunteers International  
17402 Poppleton Avenue  
Omaha, NE 68130

*Direct any questions to:*

**Sheila McNeill – [sheilamcneill@cox.net](mailto:sheilamcneill@cox.net)**  
402-630-4077

**Vernie Jones – [vsjones@gmail.com](mailto:vsjones@gmail.com)**  
402-305-8286



The Registration fee of \$275.00 covers:

Thursday - The evening reception at the Brandeis Mansion.

Friday –The Board of Directors Meeting, including lunch, dinner at the Flatiron restaurant and refreshments during intermission in the Anne Thorne Weaver lounge at the Orpheum Theater.

Saturday – A visit to the studio of artist Jun Kaneko, a tour of the Durham Museum, transportation on “Ollie the Trolley” to Mark’s Bistro in the Dundee neighborhood of Omaha for dinner and on to the Omaha Community Playhouse to see “The Whipping Man.”

\_\_\_\_\_ @ \$275.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

**Daily Prices are below:**

Brandeis Mansion Reception	\$ 55.00	= _____
Friday-Dinner at the Flatiron & Weaver Lounge	\$125.00	= _____
Saturday-Museum, Mark’s Bistro, Theater Tickets, Ollie the Trolley	\$100.00	= _____

**Guests or Spouses Prices are below:**

Brandeis Mansion Reception	\$ 55.00	= _____
Dinner at the Flatiron & Weaver Lounge	\$ 90.00	= _____
Durham Museum, Kaneko, Mark’s Bistro, Theater Tickets, Ollie the Trolley	\$100.00 =	= _____

**TOTAL REGISTRATION AND GUEST FEES** = \_\_\_\_\_

(Does not include hotel or opera tickets.)

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OVI Member’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Guest’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

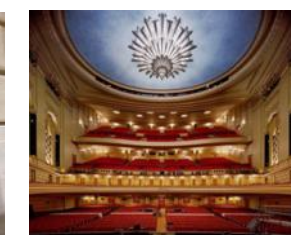
Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Make your check payable to Opera Volunteers International and mail to  
17402 Poppleton Avenue, Omaha, NE 68130

Don’t forget to call the Doubletree Hotel at 1-800-222-TREE to reserve your room.  
Call Opera Omaha’s Box Office at 402-346-4398, ext. 100, to order your opera tickets.







## Featured OVI Group



## San Francisco Opera Guild Giving Voice to Potential

In 1939 a group of 49 opera lovers joined together to raise money for opera education and to support San Francisco Opera. To date, the Opera Guild has almost 1000 members, has amassed an Education Fund of \$3.3 million, and, true to the mandate of its dual mission, enjoys an enviable history of strong financial support for San Francisco Opera.

This year San Francisco Opera Guild celebrates its 75th anniversary with special events commemorating the success of its past, its vision for the future, and marking a rich tradition of enthralling and nurturing students throughout the Bay Area with its innovative K-12 arts education programs. The Guild's diverse array of education initiatives includes in-school programs, dress rehearsals that introduce young people to opera, and conservatory programs that engage students in hands-on exploration of all components of opera.

*"When children beam with delight in their first encounters with opera, a sense of wonder and accomplishment comes from taking a leap of imagination and landing in a new landscape of possibilities. This is the heart of education and a great gift that artists give people of all ages"*

Guild Director of Education Andrew Berger



Book to Bravo Photo: Susan Malott

Since January 1939 the Guild has supported San Francisco Opera through its fundraising efforts and by creating award-winning education programs that extend the impact of opera. Each year, the organization reaches more than 50,000 students across 200 Bay Area schools. Its longest-running program, Opera à la Carte, has reached 750,000 students since 1989. San Francisco Opera Guild also serves the community with acclaimed outreach programs for adults and families. Its five Chapters reach thousands of individuals annually through lectures, events and news that encourage an appreciation of the art form, helping to ensure the ongoing relevance of and interest in opera.

"For 75 years, San Francisco Opera Guild has been at the forefront of increasing awareness of and appreciation for opera," commented San Francisco Opera Guild President Karen Kubin. "We believe that opera is a powerful educational tool for teaching the life lessons that are the foundation of confidence and integrity. We are grateful that over the years, we've been able to touch so many lives, helping to give voice to potential."



Summer Conservatory  
Photo: Susan Malott



Students attend the Opera Guild's 100th  
Student Matinée in 1973 - La Traviata.

*"It's never too early to encourage children to express themselves and explore their creativity. Breathing life into art - and teaching children that they, too, can be actors, creators, thinkers and visionaries - are key to our organization's most important missions."*

Caroline Altman

Guild Director of Education 2007-2013

## San Francisco Opera Guild Celebrating 75 Years

San Francisco Opera Guild kicked off its anniversary celebrations on December 2, 2013 with a one-of-a-kind gala dinner set on the stage of the War Memorial Opera House. Honoring longtime Guild Director and San Francisco Chief of Protocol Charlotte Mailliard Shultz, the occasion attracted more than 200 guests whose generosity helped to underwrite key education programs in San Francisco Opera Guild's 75th year.



Vice President of Fundraising Jane Mudge and President Karen Kubin



75th Anniversary Chair, Katie Jarman and Claude Jarman



Charlotte Shultz and The Honorable George Shultz



San Francisco Opera Board Chairman, John Gunn, The Honorable Willie Brown, Jr., Honoree Charlotte Shultz, Richard Blum, Senator Dianne Feinstein, Nancy Bechtel and Paul Pelosi

San Francisco Opera Guild continued its celebrations on April 10, 2014 with **POpera!**, a unique benefit event comprising cocktails, dinner and a cabaret show in the legendary Venetian Room at the San Francisco Fairmont Hotel. The evening featured Grammy Award-winning soprano and Merola graduate, Deborah Voigt, as mistress of ceremonies, with Tony Award nominee Jonathan Groff, Canadian Tenor Trio Romanza, Tony Award winner Lillias White and the sensational Katya Smirnov-Skyy performing selections from opera, Broadway and popular music.

Kicking off San Francisco Opera's 2014-2015 season and the opening night of Bellini's *Norma*, the Guild hosts **Opera Ball 2014: *Passione***, on September 5, 2014, with dinner and dancing in San Francisco City Hall.



Katya Smirnov-Skyy with Deborah Voigt



Lillias White



Canadian Tenor Trio Romanza



Jonathan Groff

For more information about San Francisco Opera Guild and its programs, visit: [www.sfoperaguild.com](http://www.sfoperaguild.com).

**October is membership renewal month**

## **Renew your OVI Membership Today**

**There are two easy ways to renew:**

- 1) **INTERNET:** Go to our website [www.OperaVolunteers.org](http://www.OperaVolunteers.org) and click on "MEMBERSHIP" then either "INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP" or "SUPPORT GROUP MEMBERSHIP" After completing the various data fields, select the membership level you wish and pay securely using Pay Pal.
- 2) **MAIL:** Complete and mail the form you receive in the mail and mail that form, along with a check or your credit card information.

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**How to Contact Our Membership Vice-President:**

Changed your address? Moving soon?  
Make sure you let Susan Malott know at:



**[membership@operavolunteers.org](mailto:membership@operavolunteers.org) 713) 522-1669**

### **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](mailto:newsletter@operavolunteers.org)

**Find us on the internet at  
[www.OperaVolunteers.org](http://www.OperaVolunteers.org)**