

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

# Opera Volunteers INTERNATIONAL

*www.OperaVolunteers.org*



## ***The Opera Volunteer Voice***

**Autumn 2013  
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newsletter of  
Opera Volunteers  
International  
\*\*\*\*\***

**Publication dates:  
Spring, Summer,  
Autumn,  
and Winter**

*Note: there was no summer  
issue last quarter*

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### **Looking Forward Looking Back**

On November 21 your new OVI board of directors will be meeting in Austin, Texas to review what we have accomplished and to hone a new strategic plan to guide our organization for the next 3 to 5 years. We also plan to have some great dinners, see grand Opera, take in the sights, learn a few things and have a good deal of fun. Look for a full report in the coming issues. Thank you Rose Betty Williams for organizing a wonderful and worthwhile weekend.

Of major consideration in our planning is what you our members would most want and what would make a real difference to you as you support opera in your communities. We also want to examine how we can best serve both fledgling and seasoned opera companies throughout the world through trained, motivated and valued volunteers.

In this issue OVI president, Rhonda Sweeney, outlines some of the milestones achieved under the leadership of past president Julie Benson. We crossed national borders last spring to meet in Vancouver, Canada as a part of OPERA America's annual conference. Members of the Vancouver Opera Guild went all out to make us feel at home in this marvelous city. They took us on daily walking tours through the city, including an intimate tour of Chinatown with a Chinese feast. In June we will meet for the OPERA America conference in San Francisco. We do not yet have full details, but one thing we know is that we can expect a warm welcome from our OVI members in the San Francisco Opera Guild. Making connections is a significant part of OVI membership.

In October OVI members reached across the Atlantic to embark on a once in a lifetime tour of Italy to celebrate the 200th birthday of Giuseppe Verdi. They visited Verdi's birthplace and witnessed historic opera performances. The trip also raised funds which help member groups through our Matching Grants Program.



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

## Happy New Year!

October 1 launches the new fiscal year for OVI. We congratulate our new board of directors who will be leading our organization for the coming year and we thank those who have completed exemplary service. New officers will serve a two year term. welcome to the following new members joining our board:

### VP MARKETING: Sheila McNeill

Sheila lives in Omaha, NB and has served in many capacities with the **Opera Omaha Guild** including President. She served a total of five years as Treasurer. She has lived in Colorado and before that in Iran and worked with the US government.

### OUTREACH LIAISON: Suzanne Breitbach

Suzanne has been a member of the **Austin Lyric Opera Guild** for over 15 years. She has served on the Board for Enrichment Events and will coordinate the pre-opera dinners for this season. For the last two years she has created and donated all the welcome baskets for the artists. She has a background in sales and has been a top producer for the past two years.

### DEVELOPMENT: Belinda Steyer

Belinda has been a Director of the **San Francisco Opera Guild** since 2005 and is currently VP Community Outreach. She is interested in educational programs offered by the Guild and has served as volunteer coordinator for **Opera a la Carte**. She has held numerous positions with the **San Francisco Symphony League**, as well. Volunteer efforts have also been focused in the fundraising area.

### SOUTH EAST REGION: Richard Falvo

Richard is a Board member of the **North Carolina Opera**. He has also volunteered at the UNC Ackland Museum. He teaches classes at Osher Life Long Learning Institute at Duke University. He has extensive public speaking experience. Richard is the former head of the Department of Cell and Molecular Physiology, University of North Carolina School of Medicine, Chapel Hill. He holds a Ph.D from the University of Wyoming.

### GULF REGION: Ingrid Kessler

Ingrid is past president and has been active with the **Nashville Opera Guild**. A piano performer and teacher, she holds a bachelor degree in music from Vanderbilt University. She will be taking on her new responsibilities as Gulf Regional Director upon moving to Birmingham, AL in November

## 2013-14 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT	RHONDA SWEENEY
TREASURER	PHYLLIS DRIVER
SECRETARY	LIBBY SISKRON
NOMINATING	JULIE BENSON
PAST PRESIDENT	JULIE ANN BENSON
VICE PRESIDENTS:	
ADMINISTRATION	MARY EARL
COMMUNICATIONS	MARY SVELA
MARKETING	SHEILA MCNEILL
MEMBERSHIP	SUSAN MALOTT
OUTREACH	ROSE BETTY WILLIAMS

### DIRECTORS

ADVOCACY	CAROLYN SANDERS
DATABASE MGMT	ANNE PROKOPOVYCH
DEVELOPMENT	BELINDA STEYER
GRANTS	MARY EARL
NEWSLETTER	RICK GREENMAN
OUTREACH LIAISON	SUZANNE BREITBACH
PARTNERS IN EXCELLENCE	VERNIE JONES
PROJECTS OF SPECIAL MERIT	ANASTASIA JOHNSON
PUBLIC RELATIONS	ANN FUSZ / ELLEN FUSZ
RESOURCES	BARBARA ECKEL
REGIONAL COORDINATORS:	
GREAT LAKES	ROSEMARY SCHROEDER
GULF REGION	INGRID KESSLER
NORTH CENTRAL	JAN SCHUEPPERT
NORTH EAST	MELODY SCHUBERT WARREN SCHUBERT
NORTH WEST	MARY SCOTT HAROLD SCOTT
SOUTH CENTRAL	WILMA WILCOX
SOUTH EAST	RICHARD FALVO
SOUTHWEST	JUDY VANDER HEIDE

## Membership

Membership renewals have been sent! Our fiscal and membership year is from October 1 - September 30, so please return your membership dues for the 2013 - 2014 as soon as possible. In order to be listed in the next Directory, please pay your dues by November 15!

Welcome to the following new members who joined during the past year!

### GULF

Bradenton Opera Guild, Bradenton (Sarasota area), FL; Jo Pennington, Shreveport, LA; Jerry Zachary, New Orleans, LA

### NORTH CENTRAL

Fargo-Moorhead Opera Guild, Fargo, ND

### NORTHEAST

Tri-Cities Opera Society, Binghamton, NY; Dorothy Allen, NYC

### SOUTH CENTRAL

Amarillo Opera BRAVO, Amarillo, TX; Madeline Aubry, Austin, TX; Suzanne Breitbach, Austin, TX; Liga Byrne, Austin, TX; Susan and Zack Hagauer, Kansas City, MO; Ann Hauser, Kansas City, MO; Kate Morris, Omaha, NE;

### SOUTHEAST

Richard Falvo, Pittsboro, NC; Patricia Jobe, Knoxville, TN

### SOUTHWEST

Valley Friends of Arizona Opera, Phoenix, AZ; Friends of Opera San Jose, San Jose, CA

### NORTHWEST

Norm Krasne, Portland, OR

**Renew your membership on our website  
or mail your renewals to :**

**Opera Volunteers International  
Phyllis N Driver, Treasurer**

**5833 Briercliff Rd, Knoxville, TN 39718**

**Contact membership chair Susan Malott at:  
membership@operavolunteers.org**

## From Our Incoming President



As we commence another exciting year for Opera Volunteers International, I want to take a moment to thank outgoing President **Julie Benson** for her leadership and dedication to OVI in the past four years, and for her vision of volunteerism and opera; also for her support in helping all of our members understand the vital role they play in the continuation of this great art form we all love!

During Julie's tenure, we held five Focus meetings -- Nashville, Chicago, Miami, New York, and New Orleans, and three Conferences -- Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Vancouver, the latter two jointly with OPERA America. We recognized new BRAVO awardees, numerous **Partners in Excellence, Projects of Special Merit**, gave thousands of dollars in **Matching Grants**, and initiated awarding the **President's Volunteer Service Award**. The International aspect of our organization was in evidence twice this year -- first at Conference 2013 in Vancouver in May and second on the trip to Italy in October for the Verdi Festival in Parma!

Our renewed commitment to OPERA America through our participation at the conferences has led to many new members from opera support groups, individuals, and companies because we are featured on the mailings, recognized in opening and closing comments, are present on the dais, have visibility with our sessions on volunteerism and our Silent Auction, and attendance at the welcome events with the company representatives -- standing shoulder to shoulder as partners, saying we are here to stay, we are here to help, and we are here as volunteers and ambassadors for opera!

As I begin my term as President, I want to remind each of you that membership renewals have been sent and we hope each of you plan not only to renew but to invite another opera volunteer to join us as well! Our strength is in our membership -- the knowledge we share with each other, the camaraderie at our periodic meetings, and our passion in sharing opera with others!

I hope to see many of you in Austin, and please "Save the Date" for our Conference 2014 in beautiful San Francisco, June 20 - 23, 2014!

Be OPERActive!

Rhonda Sweeney

## Congratulations once more to

### Roy Fisher



...on receiving the **President's Volunteer Service Award**. Roy has been a member of OVI's board for many years. He is also a life member of **Lyric Opera Of Chicago's Chapters Executive**

**Board** where he has assisted since 1955. His areas of volunteer activities have included *community lectures* (23 yrs), *Opera in the Classroom*, guiding *Student Backstage Tours*, and the ticket department. Roy's tall stature and distinguished appearance have made him much in demand as a supernumerary for **Chicago Opera Theater, American Ballet Theater and Lyric Opera of Chicago** where he performed in 22 productions including Macbeth as the ill-fated King Duncan.

### *The President's Volunteer Service Award*



*is the premier volunteer awards program, encouraging United States citizens or lawfully admitted permanent residents of the United States through presidential recognition to live a life of service.*

*Your recognition inspires others to take positive action to change the world.*

## Remembering Mona Barker

### Benefactor to OVI's Matching Grants Fund



Lifetime OVI member **Mona Barker** passed away on August 22, 2013 at her home in Anchorage, Alaska and will be missed for her many

contributions to opera locally and with our organization. Twenty years ago, Mona and several other OVI leaders made substantial endowment contributions to OVI's Matching Grants Fund to ensure that Opera Volunteers International would be able to provide financial support to deserving opera support organizations for volunteer-related projects well into the future. Since 1986, OVI has awarded over \$75,000 to nearly 60 opera support organizations. Today, the Matching Grants Endowment Fund has nearly \$30,000, and the Fund grows when members join at the Grantor Level (\$150) or above, or make special contributions to the Grants Fund. As a benefit at this level of membership, OVI Grantors are treated to a special luncheon or reception at each Conference, where the Grant recipients are recognized. Mona was a past President of the **Anchorage Opera Guild**, and she and her husband of 48 years, Kirk, split their time between Anchorage and Bellingham, Washington. In lieu of a memorial service, Mona requested that folks have dinner with someone special and make a toast with a glass of wine or beverage of their choice. In her memory and with gratitude to her service to opera, OVI raises a glass to Mona, in appreciation for all she did for opera in her community.

## 2013 Grant Recipients at Opera Conference 2013 in Vancouver



Representing Lyric Opera of Chicago, Katy Hall; Capitol City Opera, Gloria Jackson; Performing Arts League of Chattanooga, Mary Earl; Austin Lyric Opera, Dr Joseph Specter

To make a contribution to the OVI Matching Grants Fund, please renew your membership or join at the Grantor Level or above, or make an additional tax-deductible gift in the amount of your choosing on the membership renewal form, with the designation Matching Grants Fund. If your organization is interested in receiving an OVI Matching Grant, please contact Grants Director, Mary Earl ([Grants@OperaVolunteers.org](mailto:Grants@OperaVolunteers.org)). Grant application deadlines for 2014 are January 1 and March 15.

Opera Conference 2013—Creative Resurgence in Vancouver, Canada



**What a wonderful time we had in Vancouver last May!** Weather was spectacular, which we enjoyed on the welcome cruise in Vancouver harbor, and member group Vancouver Opera Guild was ever-present, in supporting Vancouver Opera and OPERA America, as well as their own **Partner in Excellence** Lore Hoffmann at our Awards dinner. A grand time was had by all!

We would love to hear about what your guild or volunteer group is doing to support opera in your region. Please let us know and be sure to include pictures and names.

**Notes from SOUTH CENTRAL REGION**



**Wilma Wilcox**, South Central Regional Coordinator,

**Eureka Springs Opera Guild, Arkansas.** At the invitation of Opera in the Ozarks board president, **Carole Langley, John Bob Wise and Wilma Wilcox**, OVI members, visited Inspiration Point for 4 operas and met several members of the Eureka Springs Opera Guild. This opera guild is in our region but is not currently a member of OVI, so materials for membership were shared. Opera in the Ozarks is in its 63rd season, but the Guild is newer.

Art in Opera is one of their current projects as a fund-raiser for Opera in the Ozarks. Projections from Larry Mansker's book Eureka Springs Impressions were used as the backdrop for Elixir of Love, set in 19th century Eureka Springs. Original art work was displayed around the theatre and sold with a portion of the profits going to the opera company.



Wilma Wilcox with head usher, Virginia Miller

**Saint Louis Opera Guild facts and figures for 2013** by Karen H. Krebs

After a most successful and highly acclaimed 2013 season for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, guild volunteers accumulated some impressive volunteer facts & figures:

- Opera Guild Boutique totaled \$35,360 in revenue
- Volunteers housed 31 artists in 26 homes
- 206 rides given by Transportation Committee
- Docents presented 50 programs to area schools and community organizations
- Advocacy sent 12 guild members to Jefferson City to visit with Missouri legislators
- Ushers seated 2,386 patrons and group members at Dress Rehearsals
- Hospitality provided 174 artists, artisans and crew members with welcome bags
- 33 volunteers provided 2,360 hours as dressers, supers and light walkers



Volunteers Myrna Hershman, Susie Hahn and Genie Bonte working in the OTSL boutique

**THE STARS AT NIGHT WERE BIG AND BRIGHT - DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS**



Carolyn Sanders with Dr. Edward Staffel.

Members of the Opera Guild of San Antonio Guild were instrumental in organizing an evening of 'star gazing' with a Champagne Reception before the performance and Post Concert Dinner held at the stately Argyle Club, as a part of The Opera San Antonio's (TOSA) Opening Gala Concert of Stars.

TOSA's Board Chairman **Mel Weingart** opined at The Argyle Club's post-concert cold lobster and flowing champagne dinner, "This event is like having been pregnant for almost four years and finally giving birth!" Weingart spearheaded the idea of **The Opera San Antonio** and has played a major role, together with a very active and supportive board of directors, in gathering funds for this project. San Antonio's former Municipal Auditorium, situated alongside the famous San Antonio River Walk, is the site of the new **TOBIN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS**, where TOSA will reside as the resident opera company, starting in the fall of 2014. The very active participation of the Opera Guild of San Antonio in this very elegant and highly successful event was led by **Margaret King Stanley** and **Kathleen Meriwether**.



Margaret King Stanley with baritone.

Spotted in the illustrious crowd attending TOSA'S Opening Concert were opera aficionado and San Antonio Spur **Tony Parker**, Santa Fe Opera's General Director **Charles MacKay**, **Joe Spector**, representing **Austin Lyric Opera** in his capacity as General Director, TOSA Interim General Director-CEO **Plato Karayanis**, Ft. Worth Opera's General Manager **Darren Woods**, Opera America CEO **Marc Scorca**, and OVI Lifetime Members **Rhonda and Donald Sweeney** from Houston.

Formed in 1974, the **Opera Guild of San Antonio** has never been associated with an opera company. They have done much to keep the dream of opera in San Antonio alive with educational programs for children in schools as well as opera education opportunities for adults.

**SOUTHEAST REGION**

Richard Falvo, southeast regional coordinator

**Opera Volunteers Supporting Wounded Veterans**

Last year an OVI board member, who prefers to remain anonymous, saw an opportunity to touch the lives of combat veterans through exposure to opera and the arts. The **ARMY WOUNDED WARRIOR PROGRAM** (“AW2”) is the official U.S. Army program that assists and advocates for severely wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families, wherever they are located. AW2 supports these Soldiers and their Families throughout their recovery and transition back to civilian life. This program, through the local support of AW2 Advocates, strives to foster the Soldier's independence. Often times the Veteran cannot return to work because of injuries received in the line of duty and must live on disability pay alone. This makes it difficult to afford some of the “extras” or “the finer things in life”. Our member felt that opera organizations might be eager to help. She began contacting Opera and cultural organizations in Atlanta ... and the rest was history.

*“My part was  
in getting this  
started.  
That is all.”*

In a letter, **Ann Yingling**, Atlanta VA advocate for AW2 said “I would like to publicly thank [our OVI member] who tirelessly worked to find opportunities for these Wounded Warriors to enjoy and appreciate Opera. Some of the organizations to donate tickets were **Capitol City Opera**, **Atlanta Opera**, the **Augusta Opera Guild** and several college programs. She was also responsible for getting **Nashville Opera** excited about supporting their own local Wounded Warriors and her work indirectly led to a group of Opera Volunteers spending a Thanksgiving meal with patients at the Atlanta VA Medical Center. But she didn't stop there! She was determined to find more opportunities for the Wounded Warriors and their families to enjoy themselves and the next thing I knew, our Wounded Warriors had free tickets to puppet shows, museums, amusement parks, concerts, recitals, and the theatre. I am so grateful to her for her tireless work on behalf of our Nation's finest!”

The response of our OVI member who initiated all of this was, “My part was in getting this started. That is all. The reason that it succeeded was simply that our Veterans needed this and our organizations realized it. It was no more than a phone call for me.”

What if all of us took a moment to consider what one little thing like a phone call could do in bringing the power and beauty of opera to others? As the holidays approach I urge you all to be thankful for your blessings and be generous in sharing the joy of music.

**To find out more about the Army  
Wounded Warrior Program  
please visit: <http://wtc.army.mil/aw2>**

**NASHVILLE OPERA GUILD** returned to an exclusive Fashion Show:

Southern Charm was never more evident than through the guild members who modeled from the Kendal Boutique collection.

Chairs, Nikki Peal and Gretchen White, knew just how to glamorize the room with floral creations of hats and purses made entirely of fresh flower presented on crystal vases dancing with jewels and candles wrapped in burlap accented in feathers and jewels.

Replacing a silent auction, were vendors featuring everything from dentistry to olive oil and pearls and much more with proceeds to benefit Nashville Opera Education.,

(l to r) Guild president, Morel Enoch Harvey, with co-chairs Nikki Peal and Gretchen White



## **Opera Conference 2014: Audiences Reimagined**

**Save the Dates  
June 20-23, 2014  
in San Francisco**



### **Opera Volunteers International**

In collaboration with

**OperaAmerica** and **San Francisco Opera**

Enjoy a weekend of stimulating sessions, great food and exciting music in one of the cultural meccas of the world. Meet with fellow opera volunteers and with the people who are creating today's opera all over the world as we explore the trends and forces that will shape opera in the twenty-first century.

*Reminder:*

**OVI GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINES ARE JANUARY 1 and MARCH 15 OF EACH YEAR**

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Find us on the internet at  
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