



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



www.OperaVolunteers.org



The Opera Volunteer Voice

Winter 2014
Vol. 38, Number 1

The official quarterly
newsletter of
Opera Volunteers
International

Publication dates:
Spring, Summer,
Autumn,
and Winter

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The Strategy Issue



President's Message



Rhonda Sweeney
OVI President

The New Year is here - 2014! OVI sends warm wishes to all our members for a prosperous year in all your operatic endeavors, whether it be fundraising, education, community connections, producing opera, or simply enjoying more and better opera!

I was told that new ideas are best introduced at two distinct times in the year -- September, the traditional start of the school year, or January, the start of the calendar year. OVI began its "new idea" in September --a Strategic Plan update, assisted by Austin-based Mary Partridge, of Impact Consulting. We emailed a survey to all members to ask what OVI was doing well and what we could do better to serve YOU, our vital and valuable members. Many of you responded, and we thank you very much. In November, our Board and others met in Austin to address the issues and opportunities identified through the survey and in 2014 will continue our work identifying actions which we can effectively address. You have asked for more support for your local organizations in addition to our matching grants program and our recognition of outstanding volunteers and volunteer projects. We are looking into more teleseminars as one means of addressing this need.

As volunteers and all-volunteer organizations we are often limited by time and financial resources, but we are rich in enthusiasm, experience, and volunteer wisdom, and eager to help each other with common issues. Our strength is in our membership, and our ability to connect those with needs to those who have walked a similar path successfully. One area where OVI can use YOUR help is in utilization of new media, including our website, and social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

If you have talents in this area, or know someone who can assist, please contact Mary Sveta, Communications@OperaVolunteers.org.

As we progress with the Strategic Plan update we will keep you apprised along the journey and look forward to hearing your thoughts and suggestions for bold actions we might take to help us achieve our mission. Thank you for your confidence in us as we enter our 43rd year of connecting volunteers who support opera in cities and local communities everywhere!



Ten Questions That Prompt Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking is an oft-elusive concept that many people cannot describe, but most agree is important.



Mary Partridge

Conditioning ourselves to be more strategic in our thinking is not easy as we are bombarded by urgent “priorities” that demand our attention. So we must find the time and energy to step back, look at our situations with fresh eyes, and open up to possibilities that we have not previously considered. Setting aside what we think we know, and developing a curiosity about what is possible or potentially new can be a good starting place for strategic thinking.

The following questions can be useful in prompting strategic thinking. Read the questions with one organization or project in mind, and realize that not every question will hold deep and meaningful relevance for every situation, but don’t skip a question until you have made allowance for the concept behind the question, even if it doesn’t immediately seem to fit the example you have in mind.

1. **What is the best possible description of our future?** Or in other words: what outcome do we want? Steven Covey said, “Begin with the end in mind.” You may also ask: What is the best possible scenario? What is the worst? What is the most likely case? Giving serious consideration to all of the foreseeable scenarios surrounding your future is time well spent!
2. **What would we do if money were no object?** So often, we start our goal-setting and planning with the budget. We let the budget determine the extent of the program, instead of the other way around. Nonprofit organizations in particular often make the mistake of letting money dictate mission performance. A more strategic and more responsible process is one of defining mission objectives, and then figuring out how to raise the money to reach those objectives.
3. **Are we prepared for success?** Most of us want to be successful. We undertake things sometimes just to see what we can accomplish. But if we don’t plan for success on several different levels, we can find ourselves taking a nose-dive as quickly as we rose to prominence. I ask my clients, “What would happen if you were *wildly* successful, sooner than you imagine?”
4. **What would our competitors fear about our future?** We must know who competes with us for funds, customers, volunteers, and talent. Once we have defined who the competitors are, we can benefit by picturing these competitors wringing their hands over our success(es).
5. **What would our most creative stakeholders want for our future?** Think of the board members, or customers/clients/members that seem not to ever worry about budget or logistics. They just have grand ideas. What would *they* want our future to be? Forget for a moment that we have to be realistic; we have to fund our initiatives. If you really needed to please this segment of stakeholders, what would you design for your future?
6. **What would our most analytical stakeholders want for our future?** Focus on what your most analytical, financially talented stakeholders would want for the future.
7. **What would happen if we did nothing, or went away?** The insights can be staggering. The response gets right to the heart of your value proposition. Are you (the organization or project) really needed? By whom? What alternatives do your stakeholders have? Knowing your customer is crucial; in fact it is absolutely essential to your success.
8. **What are we uniquely positioned to do?** Take a serious look at the organization’s core competencies. What are the things that the organization does really well? Have you capitalized on those things?
9. **What have we never tried before?** An honest examination of what is appealing about the idea can be revealing.
10. **What one thing (or three things, or five things – but no more!) would make the greatest difference in the outcome?** This question is the bridge from the visioning and “big picture” thinking to the planning and strategic action part of the process. Ask what things must be done in order to achieve the result. If, after answering the first nine questions, you have a compelling picture of the future for your organization, this step is to decide what 1-5 things *must* be done to accomplish that vision.

By now, you can probably appreciate the combination of skills that are needed to be a successful strategic thinker – a combination of creative and analytic skills, and an ability to step outside the realities of today to think about creating a desirable future for your organization. As Peter Drucker said, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

Mary Partridge is President of Impact Consulting, and has extensive experience working with and coaching both for-profit and not-for-profit leaders in defining and achieving the impact they want for their organizations.

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OVI's Guiseppe Verdi Bi-Centennial Celebration tour

By Sheila McNeill



On October 9, 2013, we met our tour directors, **Robert and Barbara Seaver**, drove from Milan to Parma and checked into the Palace Maria Luigia Hotel in the heart of

Parma. A walking tour took in the birthplace of the great Arturo Toscanini, the famous baptistery and the Cathedral with its awesome dome painted by Coreggio. Then, our Welcome Dinner at Parizzi, a restaurant with one of the best chefs in Italy.



Anne Meschery and Mary Wheeler from New York, Barbara and Herbert Dittmar from Virginia, Phyllis and Ely Driver from Knoxville, Julie Benson from Chicago, Sheila McNeill and Carter & Vernie Jones from Omaha, Libby Siskron from Shreveport, and Barbara Lewis from San Francisco.



We celebrated October 10, Guiseppe Verdi's 200th birthday, at his birthplace in Roncole and in Busseto where he received his early musical training. That afternoon we toured the opera house in Busseto and Verdi's remarkable villa and private park in Sant' Agata. In the evening we had box seats for the glorious

Gala concert at Parma's Teatro Regio. The next evening after extensive touring and another amazing meal we were back at the Teatro Regio for *Simon Boccanegra* – again we had box seats.



Saturday was the big day – we were going to La Scala to see *Don Carlo*! But first we stopped at Casa Verdi, a sanctuary built after Verdi's death to house aging musicians. Verdi is buried here in a lovely chapel. Well-fortified, we made our way to La Scala for the magnificent opening-night production of *Don Carlo*. Rene Pape sang the role of King Phillip and the sets and costuming were outstanding. It was thrilling.



Sunday had us heading to Bologna for a private piano recital by superb Korean pianist **Wonmi Kim** whose husband, **Villam**, is the concert master of the Bologna Opera. Kim astounded us with her playing and then invited us to have a pecan pie that she herself had baked.



We all came away with a great appreciation of old-world hospitality and agreed that this was a highlight of the trip. That evening was our gala farewell dinner at Parizzi, the restaurant where we'd had our welcome dinner. We were wowed by every course. It was a glorious repast!

Our last day in Parma we toured the Farnese Palace Complex. This campus houses the Farnese Theater, a wooden theater designed at the end of the Renaissance. Later at lunch, over a dessert of semifreddo and coffee, we reminisced over the past 7 days and agreed that we had celebrated Guiseppe Verdi's two hundredth birthday to the fullest. This trip was truly a once in a lifetime experience, and it also raised a significant amount of money for the OVI Grants Program. Viva Verdi!!!
Full text of this report available in our on-line edition.



Austin Focus Meeting



In late November 2013, the OVI Board and OVI members arrived in the warm sunshine of Austin, Texas, ready to network, learn, grow, reconnect with friends, meet new friends and get an insider's perspective of Austin, Austin Lyric Opera and Austin Lyric Opera Guild!

Rose Betty Williams and the Austin Lyric Opera Guild committee comprised of **Polly and Steve Barbaro**, ALOG President and Treasurer, respectively, **Craig and Peggy Kuglen**, ALOG's OVI representatives, **Diane Ingram**, **Suzanne Breitbach**, **Paula Damore** and **Paula Kothmann**, were at work early, preparing a big Texas welcome!



John Rogers Visualist Images
Austin Skyline viewed from the Long Performing Arts Center

On the Thursday night of our arrival, they hosted a special pre-opera dinner for us in the Kodosky Donor Lounge of the magnificent Long Center for the Performing Arts. Austin Lyric Opera General Director **Joe Spector** and his wife **Kate** personally greeted everyone prior to his giving a short presentation about ALOs *Don Carlo*. Then ALOG member and educator Katharine Shields provided a history and musical highlights about *Don Carlo* and information about Giuseppe Verdi.

ALO Conductor, **Maestro Richard Buckley** also made his way to each table to meet and greet with all OVI visitors minutes before the performance. We felt honored to be so welcomed.

November 2013

During intermission, we were treated to a champagne reception in the Kodosky Donor Lounge. **Joe Spector** again greeted us and expressed his gratitude for the OVI Grant to assist ALOG in the development of a special school program.



from left, Joanne Christian, Brian Kushner,
Donna and Richard Falvo and Stacy Johnson

Friday's early morning strategic planning session came all too soon, but we were recompensed by a view from the Hyatt's 17th floor conference room of Lady Bird Lake. Few of us knew that this body of water flowing through downtown Austin is part of a chain of seven fresh water reservoirs in Central Texas formed by several dams on the Colorado River. **Mary Partridge** of Impact Consulting led the strategic planning session, focusing our attention on OVI's vision and mission.



Stuart Bowne

Following the strategic planning session, we boarded a chartered bus to take us to the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and a docent tour of the facility. This was indeed a very poignant anniversary in the history of Austin. November 22nd marked the fiftieth Anniversary of the sad inauguration of President Johnson in the wake of our national tragedy of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Tape recordings of comments and life-sized photos made the anniversary even more immediate and heart-rending.

Dinner was a change of pace from our somber afternoon. We enjoyed the fine interior Mexican cuisine and libations at the renowned Fonda San Miguel restaurant.



After dinner, we headed to Esther's Follies for plenty of laughs and wit-



- Austin-style. Saturday morning we returned to the Long Center for a breakfast and presentations hosted by Austin Lyric Opera Guild. **Lissa Anderson** described ALOG's educational

outreach program; **Susan Gatlin** and **Marcy Melanson** described one of ALOGs most successful fundraisers, The Fine Wine Dinner & Auction; and **Diane Ingram** described ALOGs Ambassador Program for membership recruitment and retention. We were captivated by the presentations. Next, we had a tour of the Long Center for the Performing Arts and a performance by art whistler **Jed Cecil** who wowed us with his whistling of favorite arias.

Our afternoon tour of the Texas Capitol, left us looking up in awe.

The Texas state capitol building is the largest state capitol building in the U.S.



The dome of the building stands seven feet higher than that of the nation's Capitol in Washington, D.C.

Our final event was a send-off dinner held at the University of Texas Austin Alumni center.



Claude & Susan Ducloux

Attended by ALOG members and ALO trustees and patrons, we enjoyed the most wonderful dinner.

Claude Ducloux, son of ALOs founding Maestro and Artistic Director and famed opera conductor **Walter Ducloux**, made

us laugh till we cried. Claude ended the evening of merriment with a hearty rendition of the UT fight song accompanied by alumni waving Hook'em Horns as we said farewell to our wonderful weekend in Austin.

Jan Schueppert summarized the feelings of many about the strength of networking, valuable takeaways and lasting friendships we form as members of OVI.



Madeleine Aubry, Libby Siskron, Peggy Kuglen & Suzanne Breitbach

“What a great conference! Jim and I had a great time meeting so many lovely people, experiencing Austin in 2013, and I learned many new things, which is always good. Jim surprised me by being so interested in the topics on Saturday Morning. I guess he lives more of what I do than I was aware. I have been thinking about OVI and its mission and its strengths and the goals. This is how I see it - OVI's strength is its diverse, strong men and women who have a wealth of knowledge and have been *tested in battle*, so to speak. We can be a huge source of knowledge, education, advice, and supportive to almost every issue that would face a company or guild or volunteer.”



Stuart & Rebecca Bowne

Well expressed, Jan, and a sentiment shared by members of our group enjoying our visit to Austin.



Mary Partridge



Emory & Mary Clark, Dr. John & Susan Shore, Kay & John Rusty Allman



ALOG President
Polly Barbaro

Featured OVI Group - Austin Lyric Opera Guild by Polly Barbaro

The initiatives below might be perfect to recharge your group and generate funds for your opera company. Our on-line edition will contain the complete report including tips on how to plan a wildly successful benefit and how to work effectively with your school districts and develop programs that will meet state education requirements and guidelines.

Austin Lyric Opera Guild (ALOG) is involved in a number of projects that benefit **Austin Lyric Opera** (ALO), Guild members, and the community in which we live.

Annual Wine Dinner and Auction

The Guild hosts a wine dinner and auction each February to raise funds for Austin Lyric Opera. We began this project in 2011 and made \$55,000 after all expenses. Last season, our third annual event netted \$245,000. The event, held at the luxurious Four Seasons Hotel, features a music performance, four course gourmet meal, special wine pairings, silent auction, live auction, table sales and paddles-up donations. Preparation for the next year's event begins just after the current year's fundraiser has occurred.



Thanks to a generous grant from OVI, the ALO Guild has begun to revitalize its Educational Outreach Program.

Community Educational Outreach Program

We now have three trained docents, as well as back-up trainees. Our activities work in concert with ALO's "Opera by Night" program in which students attend the dress rehearsals of the ALO.

We have designed our lesson plans to coordinate with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum standards, which is essential for appealing to school administrators and teachers. Our docents present lessons which integrate opera with social studies and history, language, and even math, where ticket sales and other quantitative aspects of the production are used as math problems.

The Guild is extremely appreciative to OVI for its support of our educational efforts in our community. As we gain experience, we will increase the number of docents and schools targeted.

Enrichment Events

A Guild program that has been in place for some time, Enrichment Soirees, has become extremely popular with the Guild membership. Prior to each opera, the Director hosts a discussion with **Katharine Shields** covering various aspects of the opera to be performed. With Katharine's quick wit and deep knowledge of opera, these discussions are always informative and fun. Held in members' homes, with tasty dishes prepared by attendees, these often are SRO events.



Katharine Shields and Garnett Bruce captivated the audience

Membership Parties

ALO Guild hosts three membership parties each season. These are geared to foster camaraderie and serve as a wonderful way for new and existing members to get to know each other, have fun, and strengthen relationships. This season **Jo Carol Snowden** and **Gretchen Woellner**, VPs of Membership, have worked tirelessly to make sure these events run smoothly and seamlessly.

Pre-Opera Dinners

Prior to the Saturday performance of each season's three operas, **Paula Damore** and her committee transform the Kodosky Lounge of the Long Center, ALO's performance venue, into a magical wonderland, always keeping in mind the theme of the opera at hand. Among the three dinners the Guild hosts, we bring over \$20,000 to the bottom line in funds raised for ALO.



OVI - Sharing Ideas and Making New Friends in Support of Opera

(cont'd) **Austin Lyric Opera Guild** www.austinlyricopera.org/aloguild/

New members are vital to the longevity, leadership, and creativity of any group.

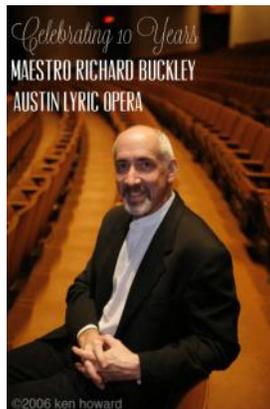
Focus on Growing Membership

Austin Lyric Opera Guild Board has focused on growing membership this season. New members are vital to the longevity, leadership, and creativity of any group. So far this year we have enjoyed a 20% increase in Guild membership. In December we held a successful New Member party.

Guild Membership VP, **Marcia Toprac**, in compiling this season's membership book, has sent out letters to prospective members, called lapsed members, and made myriad contacts to existing members to update personal information. Information on all new members is automatically forwarded to Marcia so she can update her membership lists.

Madeline Nash, VP of Communications and publisher of our periodical *The Libretto*, engineered an upgrade of our web page which facilitates joining the Guild on-line with an interactive membership form. She also updated various pages on our site, making it easier for members to view current and future activities and volunteer opportunities, not to mention the fun pictures she posts after each event. Check out our web page at austinlyricopera.org/aloguild.

The excitement we all feel about our Guild and Austin Lyric Opera seems infectious. Our efforts to grow our Guild family has begun to bear fruit in terms of engagement, growth in membership, with broader volunteerism overall.



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

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.

Austin Lyric Opera Guild Ambassadors Program

OVI has recognized the ALO Guild's efforts to foster inclusive, relationship-building activities which enrich the Guild experience for our members. The goal of this program is to reach out to the Austin Lyric Opera Guild membership, keep them informed of activities in which they might want to participate, alert them to volunteer opportunities, and generally foster a more inclusive group. Bottom line, we want and need to get more Guild members involved.

Diane Ingram offered the following at our presentation to OVI in Austin.:

Get More Guild Members Involved

- ♪ Results in Guild Members to feel more ownership in the Opera and Its Goals
- ♪ Results in the Guild Members supporting the Opera through season tickets and opera fundraising events
- ♪ Results in developing relationships with other guild members which makes everything more fun because you are working with friends
- ♪ Results in bringing in new Guild Members
- ♪ Results in having more volunteers

Formula For Success

OVI GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINES ARE JANUARY 1 and March 15

Find us on the internet at www.OperaVolunteers.org

A message from Mark Scorca - President OperaAmerica

“Congratulations to the Austin Lyric Opera Guild for hosting the most recent OVI regional meeting. From all reports, it was a great success that extends OVI’s wonderful tradition of convening members in locations across the country. Opera volunteers remain a vital element in the life of opera companies large and small thanks to the work of OVI.”



Photo: Mark Scorca wi. Rose Betty Williams of Austin Lyric Opera Guild

I invite you to attend Opera Conference 2014 in San Francisco

“Opera Conference 2014: Audiences Reimagined promises to be a particularly exciting and informative. A broad selection of sections will examine the dynamics of audience behavior and offer suggestions for engaging newcomers and seasoned opera lovers more deeply in the art form and in the life of their opera companies. This theme resonates deeply with the core mission of many opera guilds and volunteer programs, so we are especially hopeful that a record number of OVI members will join us in one of the most vibrant cities in North America for this essential annual meeting.”

FEATURED CONFERENCE SESSION:**Rebooting Your Volunteer Organization**

Attract the key talent and build your volunteer base to initiate new projects and build on past success. Learn from guild leaders about creating long-lasting volunteer associations, starting new models and reorganizing the volunteer structure to support the core efforts of opera companies.

This session will feature case studies from across the field. **DON DAGENAIS**, past president,

Don Dagenais Opera Volunteers International, will moderate.

Don Dagenais of the Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild, is a former president of OVI. Don served as an OVI consultant for a number of years and traveled across the country, working with many opera guilds and company staff members on the formation or reinvigoration of opera volunteer groups. He is the author of two OVI publications entitled *How to Form an Opera Guild* and *Recruiting and Training the New Generation of Opera Volunteers*.

Joining him on the panel are **Rita Horiguchi of the Friends of Opera San Jose**, **Kimberley Smith of the Valley Friends of Arizona Opera** (Phoenix) and **Weyburn Wasson of the Fargo-Moorhead Opera Guild**. Each of the three panelists is currently involved in restarting or “rebooting” an opera volunteer group which previously was active but, for one reason or another, became dormant.

The panel will cover the following topics:

- * The various types of opera volunteer organizations, and how to choose.
- * Determining the organization’s major function and focus.
- * Identifying the founders and training them to recruit additional members.
- * Recruiting the membership, and where to find members.
- * Organizing the members into a functioning group.
- * Identifying and carrying out initial projects.
- * Evaluating and tweaking projects for future development.
- * Organizational functions such as election of a board, officers, and adoption of bylaws.
- * The opera guild/opera staff relationship.

The workshop will include “hands on” practical advice and experience from those working on such projects in three widely different communities. The purpose of the workshop will be to deliver information, tips and pointers to those in attendance, which they can take back and apply, as appropriate, to opera volunteer organizations in their own communities.

THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER
AMERICA**audiences REIMAGINED**

OPERA CONFERENCE 2014 | JUNE 20-23

HOSTED BY  SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Special Registration Now Available for Opera Volunteers International Members
A discounted rate of \$400 is available
now through April 17, 2014.

Join your colleagues for a conference that is sure to be inspiring. Our wonderful colleagues at San Francisco Opera Guild are eager to welcome you to their city, famous for its vibrant culture, scenic beauty, diverse communities and world-class cuisine.

The OVI team is hard at work designing an *Opera Conference 2014* experience full of exciting events.

Frederica von Stade, Jake Heggie and Twitter's **James Buckhouse** are just a few of the general session speakers who will ignite your imagination. Visit the **conference website** for more information about the schedule of events.

Enlightening sessions and roundtable discussions

San Francisco Opera performances (*additional charge*)

Special dinners and events

Exclusive Backstage Tour of the iconic War Memorial Opera House.

Space is limited, so reserve your spot today through the conference website.

In addition to Opera Conference General Sessions OVI's activities include:

Board of Directors Meeting (lunch included)

Awards Dinner (\$100 per person)

"Rebooting Your Volunteer Organization" – a panel discussion moderated by Don Dagenais, past president of OVI.

A Roundtable highlighting Projects of Special Merits, featuring San Francisco Opera Guild's Virginia Ziegler who will give an overview of the website she created for her guild. Winners of awards will give a short description of their winning projects.

A Roundtable to explore new projects that member volunteer organizations are currently engaged in.

Opera Volunteers International members receive a special price of \$400 now through **April 17, 2014**. (A savings of more than 25% off the Early-Bird rate.) This includes the OVI Board Luncheon, full access to the conference activities, exclusive backstage tour, *New Works Sampler* performance and closing breakfast.

Join the online conference community and then register by selecting "Opera Volunteers International" as your member type.

To register, go to operaconf.site-ym.com.

Choose the number of attendees and add "Optional Tickets" to register for the OVI Awards Dinner.

Note: If on-line registration is daunting for you perhaps a friend or relative can help,
 or you may contact **Sheila McNeill** for assistance at **402-630-4077**

We look forward to seeing you in San Francisco!



Congratulations to
Lyric Opera of Chicago Far West Chapter
 on their 50th Anniversary
 and to Near North Chapter co-founder **Flora Boemi**
 on her 100th Birthday



Find us on the internet at www.OperaVolunteers.org

Why I support opera - open letter from Rosemary Schroeder, North Central Regional Director



Dear Music and Opera Friends,

I'm quite passionate about music and opera in particular. Opera demands our full attention via the whole story from beginning to end in music.....and in real time and space!! It is miraculous to hear gifted singers with live unadulterated finely tuned voices in a form that inspires. It is the complete synthetic combination of many forms of artistic expression. In addition to singers, and musicians it takes actors, directors, stage managers, carpenters, painters, costume makers, ushers, volunteers, and many others. It is outstanding quality and some of the greatest music ever written. When I look at a painting, I see more and more colors, shapes, lines and emotional aspects with each viewing. This is the same reaction I get when watching and listening to live opera. It doesn't matter if I have seen the opera 50 times before, sung some of the roles, conducted, directed or coached.....it is always exciting and new.....each rendition is a surprise....a new painting to enjoy.

Great opera gives artistic expression to what it means to be human, conveyed with power and passion. It is a portrayal of the struggle for psychological wholeness. This, then, is why opera matters: it gives to all of us the potential to reach into our lives and understand our inner selves as no other means can. Far from being elitist and irrelevant, it is in fact the most powerful language by which any of us can hold a mirror to the soul.

Anyone can participate with an opera company in their area and don't have to be on stage. There are economic and cultural benefits from having an opera company in your area, but more than that, opera is a steadily evolving art form that has yet to reach its pinnacle. Every season brings new and innovative productions that push the boundaries of what is possible in a theatre. Revivals of the greatest classics, adored for centuries, will endure for centuries more.

I humbly request that you do everything you can to support opera performances in your area in any way you can. Most simply, buy a ticket and go enjoy yourself with your family and friends. Enjoy opera, the pinnacle of art. Join or rejoin this group as the strength of Opera Volunteers International lies in the opportunity for its members to share their successes and concerns in a supportive network of active member volunteers....for the love of the epitome of music....opera.

Easy to join, or rejoin. VISIT: www.operavolunteers.org

Why Do You Support Opera?

We would love to hear from you . Send your responses to Newsletter @operavolunteers.org.
News items about your volunteer group can be submitted to your Regional Director.

PARTNERS IN EXCELLENCE - deadline is March 15, 2014

We want to show off your super volunteers, your innovative and successful programs and projects, your major milestones and minor miracles. OVI believes that these efforts deserve to be celebrated throughout the opera volunteer community and we're going to do just that at our awards dinner at Opera Conference 2014.

Contact memberservices@operavolunteers.org to have application material sent to you.

PROJECTS OF SPECIAL MERIT AWARD

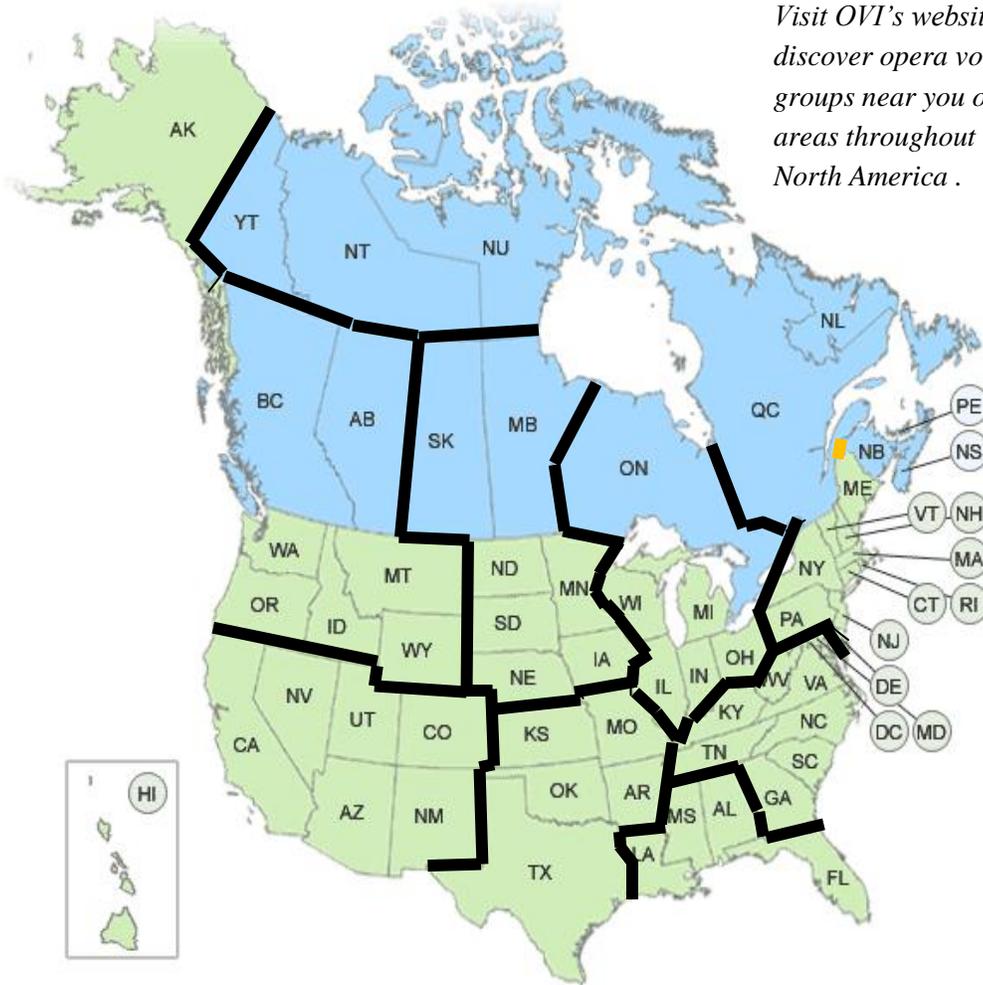
OVI is pleased to invite its Support Group members to share projects they have undertaken in support of their opera company, or to encourage the appreciation of the art form in the communities in which they reside. The Projects of Special Merit is a wonderful opportunity to share your successful projects with other support groups and to encourage them in their efforts to support and develop opera in every community.

Please look for the letter with Project of Special Merit details and Entry Forms which will be mailed to the Presidents of your support groups in January. The deadline for receipt of your forms is April 1, 2014. Certificates recognizing your achievements will be given at the Opera America/OVI Conference in San Francisco, CA, June 2014.

Questions or additional information may be submitted to jhnsn@buffalo.edu, or call 716-885-2486.

Read more about these awards at: <http://operavolunteers.org/awards-recognition>

Opera Volunteers International Regions



Visit OVI's website to discover opera volunteer groups near you or in areas throughout North America .

What is my Region?

Great Lakes Region

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Ontario, Wisconsin

Gulf Region

Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi

North Central Region

Iowa, Manitoba, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Saskatchewan

Northeast Region

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Nova Scotia, Pennsylvania, Quebec, Vermont

Southeast Region

Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia

Northwest Region

Alaska, Alberta, British Columbia, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming

South Central Region

Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas

Southwest Region

Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Liaison to Australia

Your Regional Director is the go-to person for support, education, resources and ideas to help you navigate and enhance your opera volunteer experience.

Your Regional Director will connect you to experienced opera volunteers and opera support groups within your region and the entire OVI family. Your Regional Director will help you tap into OVI's network for Projects of Merit, grant opportunities, events, volunteer awards and more.

REGIONAL DIRECTORS:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Greatlakes@operavolunteers.org | Rosemary Schroeder |
| Gulf@operavolunteers.org | Ingrid Kessler |
| Northcentral@operavolunteers.org | Jan Schueppert |
| Northeast@operavolunteers.org | Melody Schubert Warren Schubert |
| Northwest@operavolunteers.org | Mary Scott Harold Scott |
| South Central@operavolunteers.org | Wilma Wilcox |
| Southeast@operavolunteers.org | Richard Falvo |
| Southwest@operavolunteers.org | Judy Vander Heide |

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now through **April 17, 2014.**

Join us in San Francisco

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Complete article (edited version is on page 2 of the January 2014 OVI Newsletter):

Ten Questions That Prompt Strategic Thinking

By Mary Partridge Impact Consulting

Strategic thinking is an oft-elusive concept that many people cannot describe, but most agree is important. Most organizations do some form of strategic planning. Professional and managerial employees are often coached to “be more strategic, less tactical.” Most agree that it involves a combination of creative and analytical thinking, or “systems thinking.” And one often hears the admonition to “take a higher level view” – to see the “big picture” or to wear the “total organizational hat.”

Conditioning ourselves to be more strategic in our thinking is not easy, as we are bombarded by urgent “priorities” that demand our attention. So we must find the time and energy to step back, look at our situations with fresh eyes, and open up to possibilities that we have not previously considered. Some refer to this process as the “willing suspension of disbelief.” Setting aside what we think we know, and developing a curiosity about what is possible or potentially new can be a good starting place for strategic thinking.

While not attempting to crisply define or exhaustively address the skills needed for strategic thinking, the following questions can be useful in prompting strategic thinking. Read the questions with one organization or project in mind, and realize that not every question will hold deep and meaningful relevance for every situation, but don’t skip a question until you have made allowance for the concept behind the question, even if it doesn’t immediately seem to fit the example you have in mind.

1. **What is the best possible description of our future?** Or in other words, what outcome do we want? Steven Covey said, “Begin with the end in mind.” Before you think about an approach or a plan, you must know what outcome you want. When you start out on a road trip, you don’t debate which road to take before you define your destination, unless of course, the destination doesn’t matter. But most organizations are very clear that the destination *does* matter. And if the destination *doesn’t* matter, then you are not engaging in strategic thinking, but in exploration for the sake of exploration. In thinking on this question, you might add a few branches: What is the best possible scenario? What is the worst? What is the most likely case? Giving serious consideration to all of the foreseeable scenarios surrounding your future is time well spent!
2. **What would we do if money were no object?** So often, we start our goal-setting and planning with the budget in the back of our minds, if not on the table before us. We let the budget determine the extent of the program, instead of the other way around. Nonprofit organizations in particular, possibly because they often work with very limited budgets, often make the mistake of letting money dictate mission performance. A more strategic, and more responsible process is one of defining mission objectives, and then figuring out how to raise the money to reach those objectives. Even if it is unrealistic (there’s that analytical thinking part), examining the question might lead us to be creative about funding if we can get excited about a creative outcome that is particularly appealing.
3. **Are we prepared for success?** Most of us want to be successful. We undertake things sometimes just to see what we can accomplish. But we have all heard stories of the home-businesses that became so “successful” that they couldn’t keep up with demand. Success is fleeting. If we don’t plan for success, on several different levels, we can find ourselves taking a nose-dive as quickly as we rose to prominence. Delays in delivering goods or services, inability to manufacture product as quickly as customers demand the product, and so many other examples demonstrate what happens if we do not ask this question. In fact, I ask my clients, “What would happen if you were *wildly* successful, sooner than you imagine?”

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4. **What would our competitors fear about our future?** We must know who competes with us for funds, customers, volunteers, and talent. Once we have defined who the competitors are, we can benefit by picturing these competitors wringing their hands over our success(es). What is it that they would have to deal with? Whatever that is, we must make sure that it happens.
5. **What would our most creative stakeholders want for our future?** Think of the board members, or customers/clients/members that seem not to ever worry about budget or logistics. They just have grand ideas. What would *they* want our future to be? Forget for a moment that we have to be realistic; we have to fund our initiatives. If you really needed to please this segment of stakeholders, what would you design for your future?
6. **What would our most analytical stakeholders want for our future?** *Now*, you can forget for a moment that the creative stakeholders may not have had a handle on the constraints and funding challenges that occupy your real world, and focus on what your most analytical, financially talented stakeholders would want for the future. Of course, you must combine the considerations developed in this question with those of the previous question.
7. **What would happen if we did nothing, or went away?** I always ask my nonprofit clients this question. The insights can be staggering. The response gets right to the heart of your value proposition. Are you (the organization or project) really needed? By whom? What alternatives do your stakeholders have? Knowing your customer is crucial; in fact it is absolutely essential to your success.
8. **What are we uniquely positioned to do?** Take a serious look at the organization's core competencies. What are the things that the organization does really well? Which of these things are least common among other organizations, especially any that are "competitors"? Have you capitalized on those things? Many organizations go through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) exercise, and quickly brush off the strengths. This oversight cheats us out of the richness in exploring how to better leverage the things that we already do well!
9. **What have we never tried before?** There are often suggestions that just never get off the ground. But they come up repeatedly, perhaps every few years, perhaps whenever there is turnover among a board or staff. An honest examination of what is appealing enough about the idea to make it surface more than once can be revealing. As in brainstorming, delay the critical thinking about the feasibility until after the "wish" behind the idea has been given serious consideration.
10. **What one thing (or three things, or five things – but no more!) would make the greatest difference in the outcome?** This question is the bridge from the visioning and "big picture" thinking to the planning and strategic action part of the process. One way to look at this question is to think about what must be in place – what is absolutely necessary – for the outcome to materialize. Another way is to ask what things must be done in order to achieve the result. If, after answering the first nine questions, you have a compelling picture of the future for your organization, this step is to decide what 1-5 things *must* be done to accomplish that vision.

By now, you can probably appreciate the combination of skills that are needed to be a successful strategic thinker – a combination of creative and analytic skills, and an ability to step outside the realities of today to think about creating a desirable future for your organization. As Peter Drucker said, "The best way to predict the future is to create it."

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Mary Partridge is President of Impact Consulting, and has extensive experience working with and coaching both for-profit and not-for-profit leaders in defining and achieving the impact they want for their organizations. www.impactconsult.com

Complete article (edited version is on page 3 of the January 2014 OVI Newsletter):

OVI's Guiseppe Verdi Bi-Centennial Celebration tour

By Sheila McNeill

OVI's Guiseppe Verdi Bicentennial Celebration tour started for most of us on October 9, 2013, when we arrived at Malpensa Airport to be met by our tour director, Rob Seaver, and driver Ferdinando. Several other travelers had arrived in Italy the day before. There would be 12 of us, not including Rob, his wife Barbara and their beautiful dog Cleopatra. We were Anne Meschery and Mary Wheeler from New York, Barbara and Herbert Dittmar from Virginia, Phyllis and Eli Driver from Knoxville, Julie Benson from Chicago, Sheila McNeill and Carter & Vernie Jones from Omaha, Libby Siskron from Shreveport, and Barbara Wiess from San Francisco.

The first order of business, after the two hour trip from Milan to Parma, was to check into our hotel, the Hotel Palace Maria Luigia Hotel in the heart of Parma. The hotel was within walking distance of the historic center of Parma which included the Teatro Regio where we would be treated to a Gala Concert featuring Verdi's most treasured works on the next night and also Simon Boccanegra later in the week. After having lunch on our own that first day, Rob Seaver took us on a walking tour where we stopped at the Cathedral, the famous baptistry of Parma and the birthplace of the great Arturo Toscanini. Parma was also the home of the great painter Corregio and many of his works can be found there, including the awesome dome of the cathedral. That evening we attended the Welcome Dinner at Parizzi, a restaurant with one of the best chefs in Italy, where we had our first taste of Parma ham, aged 24, 30 and 36 months, tortelli, a ravioli type pasta, filled with cheese and herbs, parmigiano-reggiano to eat out of hand, and chocolate pudding with orange sauce. This meal, like all the meals to come, was accompanied by lots of Prosecco, red and white wines.

The next day, Guiseppe Verdi's 200th birthday, was celebrated by travelling to Roncole for a tour of his birthplace. He lived in this home with his father, mother and sister until he was 10 years old. At that time he was sent to Busseto where he received his early musical training. On the way to Roncole, we had stopped to visit the Rocca of Soragna, home of the Meli-Lupi family for nearly a thousand years. This home houses the greatest collection of Italian Baroque furniture in private or public hands. We were treated to lunch at Stella d'Oro in Soragna. Ravioli filled with meat in a pork shoulder sauce with truffles was followed by thigh of guinea fowl with stewed artichokes and a luscious zabaione with whipped cream for dessert. That afternoon we had a guided tour of the opera house in Busseto and on to visit Verdi's remarkable villa and private park in Sant' Agata. Verdi had designed the home and gardens that took two gardeners to maintain. Verdi died in a hotel in Milan, but all of the furniture in the hotel room was moved to Villa Verdi where it is on permanent display. That evening we had box seats for the glorious Gala concert at Parma's Teatro Regio where a full orchestra, a chorus of eighty voices, and five soloists regaled with Verdi's most famous works, earning five encores.

Friday found us travelling to Mantua to visit the Gonzaga Palace which, interestingly, was the scene of the Duke's seduction of Gilda in Rigoletto. Then we visited Sant' Andrea, the great architectural masterpiece of Leon Battista Alberti, the most important early theorist of the Renaissance. Lunch was at the famed Aquila Nigra where we started with Chicken Salad alla Mantovana, green ravioli filled with guinea fowl, along with pumpkin filled ravioli. That evening we were back at the Teatro Regio in Parma for a performance of Simon Boccanegra – again we had box seats.

Saturday was the big day – we were going to La Scala to see Don Carlo! On the way into Milan, we stopped at Casa Verdi (the Casa di Riposo per Musiscisti), a sanctuary built after Verdi's death to house aging musicians. Verdi had included the construction this home in his will with the stipulation that it could not be built before his death and that all proceeds from his operas be used to keep it running. The money from his estate ran out some years ago and the major source of funding now comes from the estate of Wanda Toscanini. Verdi and his second wife Guiseppeina Strepponi are buried here in a lovely chapel just off the main court yard which was strewn with lovely bouquets in honor of his 200th birthday.(picture) We stopped at a

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small hotel where a room had been reserved for us to change into our opera finery, then walked across the square to the Ristorante Savini for a pre opera dinner of Beef Carpaccio with sliced Pecorino cheese and Arugula salad, Milanese style risotto and an awesome Tiramisu.(picture) Well fortified, we made our way to La Scala and our seats in row N, center for the magnificent opening night production of Don Carlo. Rene Pape sang the role of King Phillip and the sets and costuming were outstanding . This was the first visit to La Scala for most of us and it was thrilling. It was close to midnight when we all piled into the motor coach that Ferdinando had nice and warm for us for the two hour long drive back to Parma. Not one person nodded off on the ride back – we were stoked.

Sunday had us heading to Bologna – we had been invited to a private piano recital by superb Korean pianist Wonmi Kim whose home is just outside Bologna. We stopped in the city center to have lunch, sightsee, or shop for several hours before we were due for the recital. Some of us ended up in a very small restaurant where we ordered tagliatelli with sauce Bolognese. This is not the sauce you grew up with – it is made from pork, veal and chopped carrots, celery, onion, garlic, milk, white wine and very little tomato. It is cooked until very thick and served with parmesan. It was well worth the wait. We arrived at Wonmi Kim's home and were greeted by her husband, Villam, who is the concert master of the Bologna Opera. They live in a compound that uses the original farm house as a guest house, the chicken coop has been turned into a space where they have all their bedrooms, and the barn houses a large living room and kitchen on the ground floor and a recital/practice hall on the upper floor. This works well because the doors to the hayloft allow Kim's concert pianos to be moved into and out of the house with ease. Kim astounded us with her playing and then invited us to have a pecan pie that she had baked herself and coffee with the family. We all came away with the recipe and a great appreciation of their hospitality - we all agreed that this was a high light of the trip. That evening was our gala farewell dinner at Parizzi, the restaurant where we'd had our welcome dinner. We were wowed by every course. The starter course was different cuts of raw beef and a small hamburger served with beer. (picture) Then came a cheese fantasy served in a shell with sweet and sour apples and string beans (picture), to be followed by cappellaci, a pasta filled with duck, in a black truffle sauce. Then we tasted three types of parmesan cheese, aged 18 month, 24 months and 30 months. The dinner was topped off with a dessert made with strawberries and passionfruit. It was a glorious repast!

Monday was our last day in Parma. In the morning Rob led a walking tour to visit the Farnese Palace Complex. This complex houses the Farnese Theater, a wooden theater designed at the end of the Renaissance. Lunch was at Ristorante Cocchi where we enjoyed a rustic salad made with bacon and parmesan cheese, followed by lasagne verdi and veal filled with parmesan with roasted potatoes. Over a dessert of semifreddo and coffee, we reminisced over the past 7 days and all agreed that we had celebrated Guiseppe Verdi 's two hundredth birthday to the fullest. This was our final meal together as most of us would be returning to the States the next day, so we all went on our own ways to finish up shopping and packing our bags. The motor coach would be leaving at 5:00 AM for the two hour trip back to Malpensa.

This trip was not only a once in a lifetime experience that we will all remember for the rest of our lives, but it also raised a significant amount of money for the OVI Grants Program. Viva Verdi!!!

Complete article (edited version is on pages 6 and 7 of the January 2014 OVI Newsletter:

Austin Lyric Opera Guild

Strategies for Success

By Polly Barbaro ALO Guild President

Austin Lyric Opera Guild is involved in a number of projects which benefit Austin Lyric Opera, ALO Guild members, and the community in which we live.

Annual Wine Dinner and Auction

The Guild hosts a wine dinner and auction each February to raise funds for Austin Lyric Opera. We began this project in 2011 and made \$55,000, after all expenses. Last season, our third annual event netted \$245,000.

Preparation for the next year's event begins just after the current year's fundraiser has occurred. So, in March and April we finalize our event Chair/Co-chairs. Early in the process we sit down with the Four Seasons Austin and discuss the prior event, things that we might like to change, as well as details for next year's event. We work with the ALO staff and many others to brainstorm regarding whom we want to honor and determine the theme for the next wine dinner.

Between these initial activities and the actual event Guild members and ALO staff perform a mountain of work, from monthly meetings of the various committee chairs, to an invitation stuffing party. Silent and Live Auction activity is high as we amass between 60 and 70 silent auction items, and contact potential donors to provide fine wines, trips, vacation homes, special dinners and other experiences for our live auction. Our Decorations Committee goes into action the day of the event, with beautiful flower arrangements on each table and strategically placed throughout the venue.

Here is a quote from Marcy Melanson, Co-Chair of this season's Wine Dinner:

“The 2014 ALO Wine Dinner and Auction will follow our past year's successes. We will have a silent auction, live auction, table sales and paddles up donations-all going to the bottom line. It will be held at luxurious Four Seasons Hotel and we will offer a 4 course gourmet meal, special wine pairings and a rising star, Joyce El Khury (soprano) to serenade us in our intimate setting.

We are celebrating and honoring our conductor, Richard Buckley in his 10th year with Austin Lyric Opera as well as celebrating Verdi's 200's birthday.

It's our hope to make a good deal of money and have a wonderful evening.”

Community Educational Outreach Program

Thanks to a generous grant from OVI, the Austin Lyric Opera Guild has begun to revitalize its Educational Outreach Program. We now have three trained docents, as well as back-up trainees. Our activities work in concert with ALO's "Opera by Night" program in which several area schools' students attend the dress rehearsals of the ALO season's three productions.

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We have designed our lesson plans to co-ordinate with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum standards, which is essential for appealing to school administrators and teachers.

Our docents present lessons which integrate opera with social studies and history, language, and even math, where ticket sales and other quantitative aspects of the production are used as math problems.

The Guild is extremely appreciative to OVI for its support of our educational efforts in our community. As we gain experience, we will increase the number of docents and schools targeted.

Below is a more detailed description of the program by Lissa Anderson, VP of Educational Outreach.

The Guild is moving along on the OVI grant that enhances ALO's Opera by Night program of inviting Central Texas school kids to dress rehearsals. The project places trained docents in classrooms to introduce students to the joys of opera by way of focused, academically sound, multimedia lessons. Each lesson focuses on a specific opera from our 27th season.

Texas public education is ruled by the TEKS—the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, the curriculum standards that determine what textbooks must cover, what is taught in classrooms, and what is assessed by standardized tests. So it is essential that we show how the lessons would not be some fluffy extra for which the teachers have no time. Therefore, James Hampton, the Artistic Administrator at Austin Lyric Opera, recruited people with classroom, content, and arts experience to develop the curriculum. They have succeeded in creating lessons that hit TEKS and incorporate drama-based instruction—a concept from the Kennedy Center's "Any Given Child" program. (That program supports ensuring arts education for all school kids up to Grade 8.) Even some of the TEA's English Language Proficiency Standards are addressed.

The lessons for Don Carlo were designed in two levels—for elementary and secondary grades. The elementary version

includes a more streamlined plot summary. For the upper level Don Carlo plan, there is a social studies lesson that focuses on the history of 16th century Spain in general and the Spanish Inquisition in particular. There are also music and English/language arts lessons. Lessons for the remaining operas will have different emphases; for example, for Tosca, students will take a close look at the city of Rome in the early 19th century. There is even a math lesson that involves ticket prices and other quantitative aspects of a performance.

The process of scheduling visits to some of the schools that sent students to the Opera by Night dress rehearsal of Don Carlo is proceeding apace. By sending docents in January:

- We will align with where the topic is

covered in the school year curriculum. Students will be either in the middle of or about to study the Early Modern era, which includes 16th-century Spain.

- We will reinforce what students experienced during the dress rehearsal. We can say things like "Remember when the king was upset because the Grand Inquisitor was telling him what to do?" and the students can say "Oh yeah, that was weird. What was going on there?"

The Austin Lyric Opera Guild deeply appreciates the opportunity to bring our favorite art form to local students through this grant.

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Guild Ambassadors Program

OVI has recognized the ALO Guild's efforts to foster inclusive, relationship-building activities which enrich the Guild experience for our members. The goal of this program is to reach out to the Austin Lyric Opera Guild membership, keep them informed of activities in which they might want to participate, alert them to volunteer opportunities, and generally foster a more inclusive group. Bottom line, we want and need to get more Guild members involved.

Diane Ingram offered the following at our presentation to OVI in Austin this past fall as a formula for success in shepherding Guild members:

To Get More Guild Members Involved.....

Results in Guild Members to feel more ownership in the Opera and Its Goals

Results in the Guild Members supporting the Opera Through Season Tickets and Opera FundRaising Events

Results in developing relationships with other Guild Members which makes everything more fun because you are working with friends

Results in bringing in new Guild Members

Results in having more volunteers

(Below are other activities the Austin Lyric Opera Guild organizes and hosts which you may find interesting.)

Enrichment Events

A Guild program which has been in place for some time, Enrichment soirees have become extremely popular with the Guild membership. Prior to each opera, the Director sits down with Katharine Shields, long a mainstay in the Austin Lyric Opera and Guild family, to discuss various aspects of the opera to be performed. With Katharine's quick wit and deep knowledge of opera, these discussions are always informative and fun. Held in members' homes, with tasty dishes prepared by attendees, these often are SRO events.

Membership Parties

ALO Guild hosts three membership parties each season. These are geared to foster camaraderie and serve as a wonderful way for new and existing members to get to know each other, have fun, and strengthen relationships. This season Jo Carol Snowden and Gretchen Woellner, VPs of Membership, have worked tirelessly to make sure these events run smoothly and seamlessly.

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Pre-Opera Dinners

Prior to the Saturday performance of each season's three operas, Paula Damore and her committee transform the Kodosky Lounge of the Long Center, ALO's performance venue, into a magical wonderland, always keeping in mind the theme of the opera at hand. Among the three dinners the Guild hosts, we bring over \$20,000 to the bottom line in funds raised for ALO.

Focus on Growing Membership

Austin Lyric Opera Guild Board has focussed on growing membership this season. New members are vital to the longevity, leadership, and creativity of any group. So far this year we have enjoyed a 20% increase in Guild membership. In December we held a successful New Member party in honor of our newest additions.

Guild Membership VP, Marcia Toprac, in compiling this season's membership book, has sent out letters to prospective members, called lapsed members, and made myriad contacts to existing members to update personal information. Information on all new members is automatically forwarded to Marcia so she can update her membership lists.

Madeline Nash, VP of Communications and publisher of our periodical the Libretto, engineered an upgrade of our web page which facilitates joining the Guild on-line with an interactive membership form. She also updated various pages on our site, making it easier for members to view current and future activities and volunteer opportunities, not to mention the fun pictures she posts after each event. Check out our web page at austinlyricopera.org/aloguild.

The excitement we all feel about our Guild and Austin Lyric Opera seems infectious. Our efforts to grow our Guild family has begun to bear fruit in terms of engagement, growth in membership, with broader volunteerism overall.

Polly Barbaro

Austin Lyric Opera Guild